

*Rekindle the gift of God that is within you
That you may be strengthened with all power
That the Gospel be preached*

**A Symposium
of Essays and Addresses
given at the
Counselors Conference**

**VALPARAISO, INDIANA
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The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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September 19, 1960

DEAR BROTHER AND CO-WORKER:

The recent Counselors and Fiscal Conference at Valparaiso was truly most successful and beneficial. God graciously granted His blessings. Everyone present was grateful to God for these blessings.

The purpose of bringing the District officials, especially all the counselors, together was to acquaint them the better with the status of our church, to discuss with them matters of doctrine and practice and thus to orient them the more thoroughly for the important work of leadership in their circuits and Districts. When you consider that eight new District presidents were elected this year and that three District presidents assumed office last year when three District presidents were elected to be vice-presidents of Synod, and furthermore that about 220 new counselors were elected, you will appreciate the importance and the necessity of such a meeting.

You will find embodied in this "Symposium of Addresses and Essays" much material for thorough study at circuit conferences and circuit meetings as well as excellent guidelines for presentation and discussion in the local congregation. Permit me to direct attention especially to the many Bible passages. These were studied in group meetings during the conference. A comment made by several men reads: "This is what we should do in our Bible classes."

The lecturers presented materials which are decidedly up to date. They meet the situations which we face today. They lead you into Holy Writ for the correct answer. You will appreciate the addresses and essays.

Dr. Oliver R. Harms, First Vice-President of Synod, who served as chairman at the meetings, presented some definite suggestions for the implementation of the program on the circuit and congregational level. Kindly refer to this presentation on pages 148 ff. Counselors are requested to follow these suggestions and lead the discussions at circuit pastoral conferences and circuit meetings.

If we carry the informative, convincing, and stimulating messages into our Districts, conferences, circuit meetings, and congregations, then under the gracious blessings of God we shall experience a real revival of interest in the teachings of Holy Writ, in a life of genuine service to Christ throughout our beloved Synod. We shall "stir up the gift of God" that is in us (2 Tim. 1:6) and shall experience anew that God hath given us the spirit "of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Dear brother, my fervent prayer is that the stirring, uplifting, and challenging experience of the conference at Valparaiso may now thoroughly pervade and mightily move every pastor, teacher, and lay member throughout our Synod. It will do much to solidify and strengthen our church body. Then we shall be all the better equipped to carry out the great objectives for which our Synod was organized. Then we shall strive earnestly and conscientiously to be loyal and faithful witnesses to Christ.

May our heavenly Father graciously bless you in your God-appointed calling.

Yours in Christ,

J. W. BEHNKEN

Opening Sermon on 2 Tim. 1:6, 7

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

By JOHN W. BEHNKEN

An old experienced ambassador for Christ has something of utmost importance to write to a young co-worker. A battle-scarred general in Christ's army, about to be retired from his tremendous but also very successful tour of duty, addressed the young soldier of the cross who had stood by him most valiantly in many a bitter battle against the forces of Satan and who should soon receive the great assignment fully to take up the armor when he himself would lay it down. He desired to remind him ever to continue loyally and faithfully to carry forward the banner of Christ's Cross. The great apostle St. Paul wrote these words to young Timothy. He wrote them from the prison in Rome. He wrote them by divine inspiration. For us all this is of utmost importance. They are God's reminders to young Timothy. Yes, thereby God asks everyone of us, especially every preacher, to remember. These words speak to us at this time. May the Spirit of God guide us as we focus our attention on the thought

"STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD
THAT IS IN THEE"

I. Why? II. How?

I

An answer to the question why Timothy should stir up the gift of God that was in him soon becomes apparent. The young preacher on whom St. Paul depended very much had been facing dreadful difficulties and would face even greater and more serious difficulties in the future. Destructive dangers had burst in upon the young Christian church both from without and from within. After the phenomenal beginning on the day of Pentecost it had indeed experienced some persecution, but this was at the hands of Jewish zealots. Now, however, also the Roman government, even the emperor, condemned the Christian religion. The burning of Rome had taken place. Nero, attempting to divert suspicion of guilt away from himself, accused the Christians of this criminal act of setting the city afire. Now Paul was imprisoned because he was spreading an illegal religion. He had been brought to trial and was awaiting his execution. Peter had already been crucified. Truly the storm of bitter persecution had broken in upon the church, and even darker clouds were mounting on the horizon. Paul would soon be removed. The great leader would die the martyr's

death. Timothy would then face the tremendous responsibility of being St. Paul's successor. As such, he would not only have to endure persecution himself but also be ready to offer leadership, encouragement, and strengthening to all fellow Christians in these dreadful days of persecution.

Furthermore, St. Paul was much concerned about the terrible, destructive dangers from within. False teachers were working havoc in the church. Think of what happened in Corinth and Galatia. Recall the sharp language which the apostle felt constrained to use in reprimanding and correcting the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

That's strong language, but the apostle felt constrained to repeat it in the next verse for the sake of emphasis. In Galatians 3 the apostle asked: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?" St. Paul knew that the future presented a very dark and gloomy picture. He told Timothy: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4)

These are the chief reasons why the apostle brought to Timothy's remembrance to stir up the gift that is in him.

What about you and me? Have we reason to stir up the gift which God has granted us? What is the situation which we face? When we read about conditions in the world which confront us today we have every reason to be deeply concerned. Ominous clouds are lowering on the horizon. In some parts of the world the storm of persecution has already broken. I have reference to atheistic Communism. Just recall what you have read and heard about things happening behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains. These are not exaggerations. If anything they are understatements. With diabolical persistence Communism is proceeding systematically to uproot and to destroy the Christian religion. Just think of what has happened in Eastern Germany, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, and other formerly free countries. Children and young people are being indoctrinated systematically in the philosophy of Communism. Even more alarming is the fact that the parents and the church are hindered in every way possible if they try to give their children Christian training. And have we Americans any reason to say complacently that it cannot happen here? Should the shocking happenings in Cuba not arouse us? Must we not realize that even now the process of infiltration is taking place in our country? Recently the Veterans of Foreign Wars met in Detroit and adopted a resolution "calling upon American educators to teach courses about Communism." The Detroit *Free*

Press had the following editorial comment under the date of Aug. 25, 1960: "Surely the best defense against Communism is the truth about it. The resolve of the American people, particularly those of tender years, to keep on opposing the tenets of Marxism will be strengthened as their knowledge of it is broadened. We will have little to fear from Communism as a domestic issue if the V. F. W.'s resolution wins the support of our educators."

To this I would merely add: if the V. F. W. organization recognizes the danger, how much more so should this be true of us Christians who after all are one of the chief targets for Communism?

Another situation we must face is Catholicism. Rome has not changed its doctrinal position one iota since the Council of Trent. It continues to teach work-righteousness. It still pronounces its anathema — and this is most shocking — on the Scriptural doctrine of "justification solely by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith." It continues to persecute Protestant defenders of God's truth. This is happening today. The magazine *Church and State* in its September 1960 issue brought the following news item: "A Spanish Catholic priest in Colombia, Father Matias Acuesta, accompanied by armed police, entered the Protestant chapel at Colorados, broke up the midweek prayer meeting, and marched the pastor, Rev. Alfredo Moreno, off to jail. He was kept in stocks, with his feet elevated, for three hours. Father Acuesta demanded a fine of 100 pesos, but the more moderate police inspector

set the amount at 40 pesos. Father Acuesta supervised the sealing and padlocking of the Protestant church and school which the priest said were an insult to the town and the nation."

Such things happen where the Roman Church has control.

Briefly let me mention also that today we face the same danger of false doctrine as did Paul and Timothy. Christendom throughout the world presents a veritable maze of false doctrines. It is extremely sad to say that there is an ever-increasing indifference to doctrine even in world Lutheranism. We shall hear more of this during these days.

These facts, which I have mentioned, to which others might be added, certainly present sufficient reasons why we should stir up the gift of God that is in us.

II

How shall the stirring up of the gift of God be accomplished? God had endowed Timothy with marvelous natural gifts and talents. A faithful mother and grandmother had taught him conscientiously in the truth of God both as to the promised Messiah and the revealed Messiah, Christ Jesus. However, the Lord had also granted Timothy special gifts and abilities as an active member of the Christian church. St. Paul had recognized that God had given him the ability to preach, to teach, to admonish, and to supervise. Hence, at the Spirit's direction, the apostle had ordained him for the important work of the holy ministry. Now the apostle sought to pre-

pare and to encourage Timothy for the tremendous responsibility which awaited him. As a loving father the apostle addressed his young co-worker and prospective successor. He does not doubt Timothy's faithfulness. He knows that he has the gift of God. He urges him to "stir it up," to fan the flame of this gift, to keep it burning brightly, to rekindle it by stirring it, and by making constant use of it. In other words St. Paul wanted young Timothy to face all dangers of the future by continuing in not being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but in keeping on with the preaching and teaching of it and thus to continue to bring to sinful men the message of salvation by faith in Christ. For God-given encouragement in this difficult task the apostle reminded Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The fact that Caesar's court had made the Christian religion an outlawed religion should not move its defenders to fear and cowardice. God still lives, and he knows nothing of fear. What undaunted courage St. Paul expressed in these words! Remember where the apostle was when he wrote this! The executioner's sword was hanging over his head. Oh, how these words must have touched and moved Timothy! But more than this. The apostle assured Timothy that God has given us the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. This is a spirit of power, firmly rooted in the omnipotence of God and in the assurance that the Gospel is a dynamic power. All this

gives the faithful preacher power to continue courageously to work on — to suffer if need be and even to die triumphantly for the sake of the Gospel. — Next the apostle mentions the spirit of love. When you bear in mind what a mighty influence and power love is, what sacrifices it is ready to bring — we need recall only what God's love prompted Him to do for us poor underserving sinners — you can understand why St. Paul reminded Timothy of the "spirit of love." The apostle added: "the spirit of a sound mind." The meaning is to be "sensibly minded." It precludes hasty, inconsiderate action in the exercise of leadership. It means what ordinarily we call tact and proper Christian wisdom and diplomacy to win friends for the Gospel. With these gifts of God, Paul urged Timothy to carry on his work faithfully and conscientiously.

Dear brethren, especially district presidents, district vice-presidents, and circuit counselors, during these days you will be led into a deeper study of two very important epistles of St. Paul. You will be led to an even deeper evaluation of your important office into which God has placed you.

I realize that you will say, "How can I perform this important work?" Or if you have been active in it, you will find so many failures, so many a neglect to do the work properly. May God graciously lead us all to true humility and penitence. May He grant us the full assurance of forgiveness which Christ procured for us. May the Spirit of God lead us to a firm reliance on

God's gracious guidance and strengthening and thus grant us the joy of carrying out our assignment.

Let me call your attention to another matter. We shall come to the Lord's Table today. Christ will deal with us individually and say: "Take eat" — "Take drink." We shall receive the body which Christ gave for us and the blood which Christ shed for us, under the consecrated bread and wine. Jesus

says to us: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." There we receive assurance. There we have true strengthening.

My prayer is that God graciously grant us a truly Christ-centered, cross-centered, redemption-centered, and sanctification-centered meeting. Yes, may the Holy Spirit Himself mightily move us to "stir up the gift of God" that is in us. Amen.

Closing Address on Col. 1:9-14

By JOHN W. BEHNKEN

FELLOW REDEEMED, DEAR
CO-WORKERS IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM:

During the past eight days God has led us anew to the summits of His holy mountains. He granted us a beautiful, panoramic view of the great things which He has done for us in Christ Jesus. Every new glance opened for us a new vista of heavenly beauty. Furthermore, every view became both a mighty motive and the enabling power to live all the more devotedly for the Christ who died for us and rose again.

Within a little while we shall return to our God-appointed fields of labor. As God grants grace we shall carry the spirit and the fruits of the conference to the brethren in our respective circuits and to the congregations which they serve. As a final word of encouragement and strengthening, permit me, on the basis of my text and as the Spirit of God grants utterance, to urge you to take with you the tremendously important Scriptural truth:

WE ARE REDEEMED FOR SERVICE
TO CHRIST

- I. Our redemption is undeniably true
- II. Our service to Christ will inevitably follow

I

Mankind, and that includes you and me, was desperately in need of redemption. God wants us to know that we were under the power of darkness.

If you read what Scriptures have to say about the devil and his damnable work, there will not be the slightest doubt in your mind about the identification of this "power of darkness." It is the "prince of this world," "the ruler of the darkness of this world." What a terrible power! And to think that we were inescapably caught in the clutches of that power. As far as we are concerned we would have remained there for time and eternity. But the apostle assures us, "Who hath *delivered* us." Christ took up the fight against the hellish foe. The battle was extremely bitter. Jesus knew this. In the Garden of Gethsemane He told His disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He told His captors, whom Judas led into the Garden, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Before His judges, both ecclesiastical and civil, He endured indescribable cruelties. On Golgotha's cross after six hours of excruciating tortures He bowed His head into death. It seemed like a disgraceful defeat for Christ and a mighty victory for Satan. However, Easter morning revealed that the seeming defeat proved to be a glorious victory. Now the writer to the Hebrews can speak of the purpose of Christ's incarnation, saying "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Because of Christ's triumph our text adds: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin." Note the emphasis — by the shedding of His blood we have the redemption. We have forgiveness. God no longer imputes our sins to us. The blood of Christ has cleansed us. We are fully reconciled to God. We have true freedom, perfect freedom, from sin, death, hell, and the devil. We are no longer under Satan's power. We belong to God. The text tells us that God "translated us from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son." What a tremendous change! What a glorious blessing! And all this was accomplished because Christ paid the price of our redemption for us; because He ransomed us. Hence we say, "Our redemption is undeniably true."

II

The apostle stresses God's marvelous purpose in making us what we are. He does so in numerous passages in his epistles. Here he states "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." To the Corinthians he wrote: "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

The apostle for this very reason assured the Colossians: "We do not cease to pray for you." He also stated the contents of this prayer. He asked God to fill them with the knowledge of His will. He wanted them to grow in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. His desire was that the gracious God who brought them into

Christ's kingdom should guide them and give them strength to walk and act as faithful citizens of that kingdom. They should so walk and act that God would be pleased with them. This would result in being fruitful in every good work. Wherever they may serve God and whatever they may do for Him they will do cheerfully and effectively. Their sole aim and objective in life is to serve the Christ who rendered the greatest service for them. Like a good tree they will bear rich fruit.

The apostle combines with this prayer for fruit bearing the prayer for an increase in the knowledge of God. These two must go hand in hand. God, the God as we know Him in Christ Jesus, has given us the Gospel. It is this Gospel which gives and enriches us in the knowledge of God and gives us power, God's power. It strengthens us "with all might according to His glorious power."

You will note that St. Paul asks *God* to accomplish these great things in the lives of the Colossians. God must do everything, otherwise it will not be done. God redeemed us. God brought us to faith. God keeps us in faith. God enlists us to serve Him. God enables us to serve Him. God even places the good works before us that we may walk in them. Everywhere in our lives the power of God is emphasized. Hence we say our service to Christ will inevitably follow.

Brethren, permit me to conclude our decidedly blessed experience which God granted us during these days with several suggestions:

1. Take the wonderful essays which were delivered and share them with your fellow pastors at the circuit conferences. In them you have both doctrinal and practical material for many conferences. As you peruse these materials, digest them thoroughly. Make them your own. You will find them to be the very guidelines you need. They will help you to be an ever better and ever more effective spiritual Counselor of your circuit.

2. Take the spiritual messages into the congregations of your circuit. Emphasize again and again that through the Gospel of Christ they have become immeasurably rich. Through these blessings they are a people who can serve Christ and surely will want to do so. Bring home to them ever and again that they, their whole life, their mind and heart and body and soul, belong to Christ. Plead with them to

give themselves ever more consecratedly to the Lord. That is your chief and most important service as a District leader and Counselor.

This includes your presentation of District and synodical finances. There is no doubt that gifts to Christ for the work in His kingdom definitely belong in the category of "being fruitful in every good work."

3. Learn ever better to say with St. Paul: "For this cause we also . . . do not cease to pray for you." Take the pastors and the congregations of your circuit regularly before the throne of grace. That is your glorious privilege. That will accomplish greater results. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Brethren, study that tremendous statement of James. Study it in its context. It will aid and encourage you mightily in your important work. Amen.

The State of the Church

By JOHN W. BEHNKEN

DEAR BRETHREN AND CO-WORKERS:

This meeting combines the Conference of Circuit Counselors and the 1960 Fiscal Conference. We have had several such meetings. This year's conference was considered to be especially necessary and important for several reasons. I shall mention merely two of them.

First, we have had the triennial District elections of officials with the exception of our Montana District, which convenes in October. The elections have resulted in more changes than has been the case formerly. We have eight new District presidents, quite a number of new District vice-presidents, and a large number of new circuit counselors. A meeting such as this will prove to be a real orientation for these men, while for those who have occupied positions of leadership this, we hope, will prove to be a real refresher course.

Secondly, the state of the church calls for careful study, review, and evaluation from time to time. The doctrine and life, or commonly called practice, of a rapidly growing church body such as ours demands this. For a number of years our church has passed through difficulties in certain doctrinal issues. Our conversations with other Lutheran church bodies have been criticized. Documents which the participating bodies prepared, which were to serve as a possible basis for future

fellowship, and which our Synod adopted, or of which it stated that they contained nothing contrary to God's Word, became the cause of some controversy and discussion. More recently we have had the difficulty concerning the question of Scriptural inerrancy. Then there are the enormous problems connected with missionary expansion, the training of a sufficient number of missionaries, pastors, and teachers, both at home and abroad; in foreign fields especially the training of national workers. This means the expansion of our colleges and seminaries. It means the recruitment of men and women for this special service in Christ's kingdom. With it all we must not overlook the needs of established self-sustaining congregations, their schools, Sunday schools, Bible classes, etc. Then we cannot ignore the support of the church's work, the financial program so urgently necessary for this work. Then there is the problem of worldiness creeping into the church and rearing its head in it. Again we face the issue of holding the line over against fraternal organizations. Yes, who would mention everything which needs constant study and evaluation?

As mentioned, our meeting combines the financial problems and the spiritual counseling program, both of which are urgently necessary if we wish to meet the tremendous obligations confronting us in the work of our Savior's kingdom. The matter of finances will be pre-

sented by Mr. Wm. Fenske of Synod's Board of Directors, and I am sure it will receive thorough consideration. At this time I am interested rather in presenting the present status of the important spiritual issues which confront us. I realize, of course, that also finances in the church are based on a truly spiritual foundation. They must be, otherwise they do not fit into the program of the church and would surely lack the proper motivation. However, the presentation will come from one who is better acquainted with this phase of the church's work.

BLESSINGS WE HAVE ENJOYED

During the years that I have been permitted to serve my Savior both in our Texas District and in our beloved church at large, I have always felt constrained to marvel at the wonderful and gracious blessings which God has showered on our church in most abundant measure. I certainly concur in the opinion which undoubtedly you have heard expressed, namely, that our Synod has been blessed of God more abundantly than any other church body since the days of the early Christian church. I could not begin to enumerate them all, but I would like to name a few of them that with me you may rejoice wholeheartedly and thank God implicitly for His gracious benedictions.

The most outstanding blessing is the purity of doctrine. God has been especially gracious to us. Our fathers, who organized Synod 113 years ago, had passed through experiences which prompted them to insist on sound Biblical doctrine as the foundation on

which our church body should be built. This was not a matter of policy, but a matter of principle with them. It was based on firm conviction grounded in Holy Writ. It is the priceless legacy which we have received through our fathers. God has preserved this precious heritage for us. He did it by granting us faithful and conscientious pastors, teachers, and professors who were thoroughly persuaded of the true doctrine and to whom loyalty to Scripture as the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God was the matter of paramount importance in their ministry. We have every reason to thank God for this heritage which has been entrusted to us that we may preserve it for future generations. As we think of this, we must recall that it is something decidedly unique that a church body has enjoyed purity of doctrine for over a century.

Another marvelous blessing which our Synod has enjoyed from its very inception, and even prior to that, is the training of faithful and conscientious pastors and teachers. I recall a friendly social meeting with the now sainted Dr. Frederick Knubel, the first president of the U. L. C. A. We were discussing some of the doctrinal issues when he referred to the great advantage which we were enjoying because our fathers had the vision to establish a seminary for the training of Synod's pastors. He remarked that the churches and ministeria which had formed the U. L. C. A. had not shown such vision but their ministers were trained in the theological departments of Reformed schools, or they received a meager

training in some parsonage. Do we fully appreciate the ever-widening stream of graduates which has flowed from the spring of our colleges and seminaries? And what graduates they have been! True not everyone has been an exceptionally brilliant light. Not everyone has been eminently successful as a shepherd of Christ's flock. Not everyone has been an outstanding pulpit speaker. There have been exceptions. But think of the great number of faithful shepherds, who have fed or are feeding Christ's flock, both the sheep and the lambs. Undoubtedly our pastors and teachers far excel those of our other denominations in actual kingdom work. What a blessing!

Another blessing is the marvelous growth in the number of believers which God has given our church. The numerical growth in membership must not be overlooked. It is true that we have been accused of emphasizing growth in numbers. If this is done in a spirit of braggadocio, it is wrong. You and I have no reason to boast. However, we surely have every reason to acknowledge growth in numbers as a gracious blessing of God. We know that we merely plant and water but God giveth the increase. We know that from the very beginning it was God who added to the church daily such as should be saved. And since the Lord has graciously granted us marvelous growth we thank Him for this blessing.

Undoubtedly another gracious blessing of God throughout the history of our church and also today is the system of our parish education. It is truly

remarkable that our fathers established a system of parochial schools. They did not bring this idea with them from Europe. Over there they had state-supported and state-controlled schools. Of course, in these schools they had the teaching of religion, but they were not parish schools as we know them, controlled and supported by the congregation. What a blessing that more and more congregations realize the value of such schools! According to the latest statistics, we passed the 150,000 mark in pupil enrollments. We have 57,100 more children attending our schools than we had a decade ago. We gained 191 schools during the past ten years. Then there is the Sunday school, which has passed the 800,000 enrollment mark. These pupils are served by 90,000 teachers and staff members. The recent Synodwide Sunday school convention proved to be an outstanding success and undoubtedly will do much to further the cause. As to enrollment in the Bible classes, we wish that we might report larger numbers, but we hope that this area of our work of education will grow much during the coming years. We are grateful that God has given us an enrollment of about 230,000.

I must not forget to mention the blessings which we enjoy as a result of the work of our Evangelism Department. Especially the PTR mission has interested and trained more of our people to be witnesses to Christ, to be personal ambassadors for their Savior. With it has come greater interest in missions. Also the auxiliary organizations, the LWML, the LLL, and the

WL have done much to enkindle greater interest for missions.

Other blessings could be mentioned, such as our church life and activity. Our attendance at services, though it leaves much to be desired, is very good when compared with church attendance in Europe. We may also speak of an increasing interest in Holy Communion. Ten years ago we recorded an average participation at the Lord's Table of only three. Today — though not a phenomenal improvement, yet an improvement — our communicants partake of the Lord's Supper an average of 4½ times per year. Our churches are celebrating Holy Communion more often, and our people are seeking the blessings of the Lord's Supper more often.

Considering all these facts, we have good reason to conclude that there is a deepening spiritual awareness and a deepening of spiritual life in our growing membership. For all this we have every reason to thank and praise God.

MATTERS THAT NEED ATTENTION

Though we are a decidedly God-blessed church body, we are by no means perfect. We have our faults and weaknesses. There are matters which need earnest attention and improvement. As we study and evaluate the state of the church, we have every reason to give attention to our deficiencies. We should know that of him to whom much is given shall be much required. We shall surely conclude that we who have been blessed so extraordinarily have every reason to approach God in true penitence, acknowledging our fail-

ures and transgressions and imploring His gracious help for improvement.

When Synod celebrated its 25th anniversary, the sainted Dr. C. F. W. Walther delivered the festival sermon on the topic "Wir sind nicht mehr die wir waren" (We are no longer what we were). Of course, he pointed out in telling language that the love for and interest in God's Word was no longer as fervent as it had been. What shall we say today? Do we find that fervent, burning love for God's holy Word in the hearts and lives of our pastors and people, our teachers and pupils, which God has every right to expect? Do the homes of our pastors and people sparkle with an eagerness for regular family devotions? Can our families say that there is growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Is Sunday the day to which the family looks forward as a day of blessings and worship? Or does the trip to relatives, or to the vacation spots, or the use of the family boat on the river or the lake interfere? Does the automobile serve to bring people to church or take them *away from* church? Remember that Dr. Walther and his people had nothing like these things to tempt them.

What about genuine interest in the matter of doctrine both on the part of our pastors and our people? We realize, of course, that our people never were above the level of their pastors. The pastor guides and directs, instructs and trains, the people committed to his charge. Some letters which I have received from some of our lay people, both men and women, indicate that

there is some weakening. Some have complained that we argue too much about minor doctrines. Of course, this is in connection with their desire for union with other Lutherans. They say that we should overlook these small differences and merely decide to get together. Is there sufficient emphasis on true unity? Do we stress the building on solid foundations sufficiently? There is no doubt that we are living in a day when the whole atmosphere is charged with a get-together spirit. Our people are approached and urged to become a part of this movement. Are we doing enough to aid our people to understand the matter correctly in the light of Holy Writ?

This brings with it the question whether we put forth real efforts to indoctrinate our people. Is there true depth to our program of indoctrination? Are the children and adults whom we confirm — and thank God that the number of adults is steadily increasing — getting a thorough knowledge of Bible teaching? Do we give them opportunity to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the messages which resound from our pulpits as well as in our Bible classes? Our preaching needs constant watching. When we enter the pulpit we are to proclaim textual sermons. That is the promise we make when we read our text. We are to preach Law and Gospel, the Law in all its severity and the Gospel in all its sweetness. Are we getting enough of that kind of preaching? Is there true depth to our preaching? I do not wish to reach into Dr. R. R. Caemmerer's topic. I would

rather urge you to follow him closely. I know that some complain that altogether too little Gospel is preached. Men have asked me, "Why do we not get the blessed assurance of forgiveness more often?" Why not more comfort and encouragement? Why always Law and more Law without any Gospel? The great strength of our Synod's pulpit work has been its Scriptural preaching rightly dividing the Word. Let us continue in those paths. Let us preach not merely about Christ, but let us preach Christ.

That merely activism is not truly church work will be emphasized. It requires emphasis. Our church has been accused of drifting into activism. We need to examine ourselves to determine whether we are awakening in that respect.

Among the weaknesses which are manifesting themselves is the spirit of worldliness. At the recent convention of our Michigan District one evening was made available for a pageant under the title "When He Comes Will He Find Faith?" The writer of the pageant, the narrators, and the young people who enacted it reached into the common everyday experiences and in a most forceful manner portrayed that also many, many of our church people live and act as worldly people live and act. They live not merely *in* this world but also *with* the world. Their conduct, their behavior, their conversation reveals no difference between them and the children of this world. There were many scenes to portray this sad fact. I shall never forget the scene of a young man of our church attending a

Saturday night cocktail party and the remarks connected with it. Throughout the entire pageant there came again and again the heart-searching question: "When He comes, will He find faith?" It would be wonderful if this or a similar pageant could be seen and heard by all our congregations.

In the program of our conference a special period has been set aside for Dr. Paul M. Bretscher, the chairman of our Committee on Fraternal Organizations. I am glad that this was done and that the good doctor has consented to address us, and that for two reasons. On the one hand because he has up-to-date information on lodgery. He and his commission members keep themselves well informed on all developments. They know the rituals of the various lodges and are well acquainted with any changes which may have taken place. On the other hand, Dr. Bretscher realizes — and we should all realize — the truth of the old adage "Eternal vigilance is the price" also as far as our Scriptural position on lodgery is concerned. We have some weak souls. Some men seemingly take Synod's position, clearly stated in our synodical *Handbook*, rather lightly. They go their own way irrespective of what Synod may have adopted after very thorough consideration. Evidently they have not given thought to the very evangelical approach which is outlined, truly evaluated, but also truly firm. I realize full well that sometimes men have inherited a mess. Someone of their predecessors was indifferent and let the bars down. This makes it very difficult. But we have had and

still have faithful and conscientious men who undauntedly but evangelically and firmly take hold of the problem and under God's guidance and blessing succeed in getting men to realize that they must choose between lodge membership or church membership. It means either-or. It cannot continue to be both.

A problem which confronts the church today much more seriously and much more frequently than in the past is the problem of religious unionism. The transition from the German into the English language has brought our church more definitely into the stream of American life. Our pastors and our people are brought face to face with situations which our forefathers did not know.

A charge which has been voiced against our Synod is that we are becoming guilty of unionistic practices. The charge is made by our associates in the Synodical Conference and also by some within our own ranks. Those who make the charge direct our attention to the fact that we join in prayer with such as are not in doctrinal agreement with us. As a Synod we adopted a resolution concerning joint prayer at our Saginaw Convention in 1944. This does not throw open the doors to promiscuous prayer on every occasion. It will be well for all our leaders to read the Saginaw resolution carefully. Our circuit counselors will do well to discuss it with the brethren at the circuit conferences. Let our men weigh and consider well that it will never do to act independently and care little or nothing how it may affect the brethren

and what difficulties it may bring our synodical committees or officials.

I do wish to mention that in our services we should pray more frequently and more fervently for our missions at home and abroad. A person does not hear such prayers often enough. We should also have prayer more frequently for our colleges and seminaries. In the general church prayer, our fathers used to pray regularly: "Segne

alle rechtgläubigen Lehranstalten zur Ausrüstung treuer Arbeiter in deinem Weinberge." Our fathers knew that prayer well. God heard their prayers. I am sure you will agree that to this very fact must be attributed the fact that throughout the years we have had the great blessing of doctrinal purity proclaimed by faithful and conscientious pastors, teachers, and professors. May God graciously preserve it for us.

Matins

By E. JULIUS FRIEDRICH

MINDFUL OF ETERNITY

He has put eternity into man's mind. Eccl. 3:11 RSV.

When we study the church's problems and opportunities and plan her work, we hardly ever look far enough ahead. We are interested primarily in today, and when we are compelled by circumstances to look ahead, we usually stop with the end of the fiscal year, the end of the synodical triennium, the end of our tenure of office, or at best the end of our lives. Beyond that we seldom go. In this we are true sons of Adam and Eve. In the great crisis of their lives they did not look far enough ahead either, and the result was an everlasting tragedy.

Since it is our assignment to build the kingdom of God today, we must of course be interested in today. We must know the world we live in. We must know what people are thinking and doing, what their problems are, how they are reacting to the revolutionary achievements of science and technology, to what extent and in what way they are being influenced by modern pagan ideologies. We must know what the opportunities and the perils of the church are and how her message must be shaped to meet the needs of the hour. All this requires intense concentration upon the present.

But we dare never become so completely wrapped up in today as to lose sight of the great tomorrows of divine

prophecy or the glorious vision of eternity. God does not want us to be prisoners of today, captives of our immediate environment. On the contrary, He wants us, His chosen workmen, to live and move and have our being in the light of eternity, ever mindful of the fact that we are building His kingdom not only for today or tomorrow, but that timeless time known to us as eternity. For this reason "He has put eternity into man's mind."

"God has put eternity into man's mind," says the ancient Preacher. That happened at Creation. When God made man, He built eternity into his personality. The soul of man is immortal, his mind is everlasting. As a result, there is enshrined in the heart of man a deep and abiding consciousness of eternity, a strange and nameless longing which breaks through the stone walls and iron bars of his present existence and thrusts out far beyond the barriers of time and space into the infinite reaches of the eternal.

This mysterious affinity with eternity which God implanted in the soul of man at Creation has like all other human faculties been impaired by sin. As a result, man in his natural condition has a fragmentary and distorted concept of eternity, a concept that is vague and terrifying. But the moment Christ enters the human heart with His grace and sanctifying powers, the eter-

nity which God put into man's mind is rendered beautiful and inspiring again, an inexhaustible source of comfort, joy, and hope. It is transformed into a joyful looking forward to and hastening unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Death is changed into the portal of everlasting life. The great white throne is transformed into the mercy seat of Christ, and eternity itself becomes our heaven. In view of this, St. Paul said to the Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," Col. 3:1f.

For a Christian eternity in the heart means living, working, and worshiping under the spell of heaven, face to face with eternity.

Face to face with eternity! Do you know from personal experience what this really means? Many years ago I was told one night in the hospital that I might not live until morning. Suddenly I found myself face to face with eternity, and somehow everything looked different to me then than it had ever looked before. I am sure that my sense of values and my perspective were closer to the truth that night than at any other time in my life.

What a wonderful thing it would be if we would make up our minds to conduct every session of this conference face to face with eternity, everyone holding the glorious prospects of eternity in mind, everyone working at today's problems and our plans for tomorrow under the tremendous urgencies of eternity.

In the light of eternity we see ourselves as we really are — poor sinful mortals, guilty of many transgressions. In our concern for others we often forget what we really are. But in the awesome presence of eternity all pretense is swept away. We are stripped of our clerical vestments and find ourselves standing in all our nakedness under the penetrating rays of the eternal light. With contrite hearts we cry, "O God, for Jesus' sake, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and then we hear from the mercy seat the voice of Him who loves us and redeemed us with His own blood, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

In the light of eternity we also become profoundly conscious of our own weakness and our inadequacy as builders of the kingdom of God. No proud display here of our talents and position, no arrogant strutting because of our achievements, no reckless self-confidence; but instead the humble confession that we are not sufficient of ourselves and a childlike prayer for divine help. And the answer from the mercy seat? "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

In the light of eternity moreover we recover our lost perspective. In the humdrum of daily living most of us are apt to lose our sense of spiritual values and our feeling for proportion, our perspective. Matters of great importance are often pushed into the background, while unimportant and even trivial things often hold the center of the stage. This happens also among us. But the result is always the

same — a distorted picture, warped judgments, and bad decisions. For this reason our conference ought to be held in the light of eternity, where first things always come first.

In the light of eternity we are also brought face to face with the supreme importance and everlasting significance of the work which we are doing as builders of the kingdom of God on earth. This is not primarily a matter of meetings and programs and budgets and buildings, of preaching and teaching and mission work — not merely a matter of life or death. It is all this, but it is infinitely more. It is a matter of Christ or Belial, heaven or hell, eternal life or eternal damnation for untold thousands of immortal souls within our reach whom the Son of God has redeemed with His own blood. What an awful responsibility! What a powerful incentive to get down to work!

My brethren, God has given us much important work to do. Vexing problems are crying for solution. Unprecedented opportunities demand action. May He give us grace to proceed with devotion, wisdom, and courage, building His everlasting kingdom in the framework of today — with the light eternal upon our foreheads and the joy of heaven in our hearts.

BY FAITH

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. 2 Cor. 13:5.

We have come together here as God's workmen to do our part in building His everlasting kingdom. Nothing could

be more important than this. But has it ever occurred to you, my esteemed brethren, that it might not be out of place for each and every one of us in this conference to ask himself before the tribunal of his own conscience, do I really have a right to be here? Do I have a right to participate in the work of this conference?

No doubt this sounds strange to some of you, and one or the other is apt to reply, of course I have a right to be here. I belong to a congregation which holds membership in our Synod, and I have been duly elected to the official position which I am now holding in our church. True! But is this all that you can say for yourself? The big question is whether you and I have a right before God to be here, whether God wants us to take part in the building of His kingdom, whether God has commissioned us to do this work. We dare never lose sight of the fact that the Great Commission was given exclusively to the true church of Jesus Christ and to those who hold membership in it. God wants Christians and Christians alone to build His kingdom. The hallowed walls of Zion are not to be defiled by unclean hands.

But what is the basic thing that distinguishes the Christian worker from those who are not Christians? Faith, and faith alone. If a man does not have faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, even his work in the church is an abomination in the sight of God no matter how able he may be, no matter how hard and efficiently he may work, no matter how prominent he may be in the visible organization of

the church, for "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6. Or as St. Paul puts it, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. 14:23. In view of this, it certainly behooves every one of us to examine himself whether he be in the faith, testing himself honestly and without flinching in the light of the Word of God.

Unfortunately, we are inclined to take this matter rather lightly and at times even resent it when it is brought to our attention. Some years ago when the pastors and teachers of our Synod were urged to search and try their ways, a certain district official was heard to exclaim in utter bewilderment, "What is our Synod coming to anyway? Now even our pastors are being admonished to examine ourselves whether we still have faith!"

What this good brother failed to realize was the fact that we pastors, teachers, and lay leaders in the church are perhaps in greater need of regular self-examination than anybody else. We too are living in an age and an environment which are not at all conducive to spiritual reflection and inner growth. In addition, we are exposed to our own specific perils. Occupied day after day with the wonderful truths of divine revelation and the priceless treasures of our Christian heritage, we may through a superficial familiarity become rather professional in our worship and work and thus gradually lose our appreciation and love for the Gospel. Moreover, we are in constant danger of becoming so concerned about the affairs of the church and the salvation of others as

to forget about our own souls. Saint Paul keenly recognized this, for he was afraid that having preached to others he himself might be a cast-away.

The fact that we are busy in the church and perhaps even occupy positions of honor and leadership does not guarantee that all is well with us spiritually. In view of this, every one of us would do well this morning to ask himself a pointed question, "Do I really have faith?"

"Do I really have faith, saving faith?" No one can answer this question for us. Everyone must answer it for himself, before the tribunal of his own conscience and in the presence of God. In order to arrive at the correct answer, we must, however, keep in mind that when we are examining ourselves in this matter we must examine ourselves not by the demands of the Law but by the consolation of the Gospel, according to the Gospel and the Gospel alone, which speaks to us about our faith in Christ.

But what is the Gospel? Unless we know this, we can never find the right answer to our question. The Gospel is not God's command to believe in Christ, or to decide for Christ, or to surrender ourselves to Christ, or to live for Christ. Neither is it merely an invitation to come to Christ to receive His blessings. It is indeed an invitation, but it is much more. It is a message from God, good news, a divine announcement charged with the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel God tells us that

Christ has atoned for our sins by His death, that our redemption has been sealed by His resurrection, that all our sins are forgiven, and that the door of heaven is open to us. These are accomplished facts, and we need do nothing at all to co-operate in bringing them about or making them effective.

But where does faith come in? Doesn't St. Paul say, "By grace are ye saved through faith"? And doesn't Jesus Himself say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"? Indeed we must have faith, but faith is not what many people think it is, neither is it what Satan and the Old Adam within us try to tell us. Faith is not something that we do for God by an heroic act of the will or something that we do for ourselves by a great decision. It is something that God bestows upon us as a free gift through the Gospel and by the operations of His Holy Spirit. And the process is very simple. God tells us that our sins are forgiven and that salvation is ours because Christ has suffered and died for us. "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." And the very moment we are comforted by this, faith has been born in our hearts.

But we dare not lose sight of the fact that we are here as God's workmen to work in the building of His kingdom. Our self-examination should therefore be focused not only upon our personal spiritual life, but also upon the work which we are doing as Kingdom builders.

And here we come upon something that seems very strange indeed. In

speaking to our people we always stress the fact that in order to be good and acceptable to God our so-called good works must be the fruits of our faith, for "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This is in strict accordance with the Holy Scriptures. But how often do you and I apply this principle to the work which we do in the church as synodical officers, pastors, teachers, professors, and lay leaders? Isn't it possible that some of us may have gotten into a rut in this matter, either regarding our church work as merely organizational assignments and the discharge of professional duties or assuming that all our activities in the church are good works in the sight of God because we are Christians? Take our present conference, for example. Is the work which you and I are doing here and the work which we will do later as a result of this conference merely the performance of a job or is it actually a fruit of our faith? "Let every man prove his own work," Gal. 6:4.

My brethren, do you and I have a right to be here? Does God want us to help with the building of His kingdom? Has He commissioned us to do so? If we have found comfort and joy and peace in Jesus, then we are God's children and God's workmen, and that even though our faith be like a smoking flax and our work marred by many imperfections. Endowed with faith, we possess the highest qualification for work in the kingdom of God.

Forward then in the name of Jesus, for by faith in Him we are able to move mountains.

THROUGH THE GOSPEL

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Rom. 1:16.

We are living in the age of power — tremendous, apparently unlimited power. Man has succeeded in unleashing some of the terrific energies which the Almighty stored up in the universe at Creation, and has found ways to harness these mysterious energies and to put them to work in his service. The results are astounding, terrifying. Man is beginning to believe that he has so much power at his command now that nothing is impossible for him. By and by he will emerge as the master of the entire universe. He even boasts of being able to blast the entire earth into fragments and the human race into everlasting oblivion.

But all innatural physical energies of the universe plus the wonderful powers with which the mind of man is equipped are not equal to the task which God has assigned to you and me as builders of His kingdom. Potent and wonder-working as they are, they cannot drive evil from a single human heart or save one soul from everlasting damnation. In the combat with the forces of evil, in the fierce struggle to deliver men from eternal death, only the almighty power of God Himself will suffice. Jesus reminded His apostles of this when He sent them out to make disciples of all nations, for on that occasion He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yes, indeed, only the almighty power of God can rescue the sinner from the power of the devil. Only the almighty power of God can build His everlasting kingdom.

But where does that leave us poor, weak, sinful mortals as builders of the kingdom of God? And what can we hope to accomplish at this conference and later on throughout Synod and in our mission fields by our feeble, human efforts?

The answer is so amazing, so thrilling and inspiring as to be almost incredible. Because you and I are by faith in Jesus Christ God's workmen in the building of His kingdom, He has equipped us with divine power and enabled us to bring this power to bear upon the souls of men and the world we live in. This is what St. Paul had in mind when he said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

In the Gospel we have the power of God, the only power that can deliver man from the bondage of sin and Satan, the only power that can build the kingdom of God upon earth. What a wonderful encouragement for us in our work, also at this conference. The task before us is great, far too great for our limited human resources. And yet we can proceed boldly and confidently, undismayed by any obstacles or fiendish opposition which may beset our

path, for in the Gospel we have the power of God at our disposal, and with the power of God we can never fail.

It was this mysterious, mighty power of the Gospel that transformed proud Saul of Tarsus, enemy of the Cross of Christ, into the foremost theologian, preacher, and missionary of the Christian church. It was this power that toppled ancient pagan civilizations and built the glorious *Una Sancta* upon the ruins of fallen empires. It was this power that sustained the growing church under bloody persecutions and enabled her to triumph over the most brilliant champions of anti-Christian ideologies down through the centuries. It was this power that revealed Christ again in His full glory through the Reformation and provided the incentive for the great missionary movements of modern times. And it is this power, and this power alone, that will invest the church of today with life and strength and the spirit of conquest, making her a bulwark against all the forces of evil and guaranteeing her final victory over all her foes — provided of course that she continues to use it conscientiously according to the will of God.

Yes, provided she uses it conscientiously according to the will of God. Millions and millions of tons of water may be stored up in the great reservoir behind Boulder Dam, a tremendous potential of power, but as long as they are locked in by massive concrete walls they will not generate one spark of electricity or cause a single blade of grass to grow. However, when the sluices are opened, then the wheels of

industry begin to turn and the desert begins to blossom like a rose. So also with the Gospel. As long as it lies idle upon the printed page or the tablets of our memories, it cannot regenerate a single human heart or add one stone to the walls of Zion. It must be put to work. It must become operative. And Jesus tells us how to do this. "Preach the Gospel." Tell people the good news that their sins are forgiven and that the portals of heaven are open to them because Jesus lived and suffered and died for them and then sealed His great work of redemption by His glorious resurrection on Easter morning. Tell them that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It is just as simple as that. By talking to people about Jesus and His love against the stern background of the moral law we release the mysterious, divine power of the Gospel and bring its impact to bear in full measure upon their hearts. And having done that, we leave the rest to God.

My brethren, do we still have that strong and unwavering confidence in the power of the Gospel which we ought to have as builders of the kingdom of God? At times one gets the impression that there is a growing feeling among us, unexpressed but tangible nevertheless, that the old-fashioned simple Gospel of Christ is not enough — that in this atomic space age of ours it must be supplemented, implemented, vitalized by human devices — that it must be retailored to fit current trends

of thought and behavior in order to become effective. Hence a noticeable overemphasis on methods at the expense of the Gospel truth itself. At the same time the exultant, evangelical wonder note which has been so characteristic of Christian preaching at its best seems to be disappearing from our pulpit utterances, and all too often our programs of action seem to lack the evangelical spark and the powerful dynamic of the genuine Gospel appeal.

Isn't it perhaps time to pause and ponder?

IN BROTHERLY LOVE

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. John 13:34.

These words were spoken by our Lord in the Upper Room on the evening before His crucifixion. They were spoken to the men whom He exactly six weeks later was to commission as the master builders of His kingdom. But although they were to work together on one great project, they were not at all alike. They had different backgrounds, different personalities, different temperaments, different likes and dislikes, and in some respects also different opinions. Having lived and worked with them for three years, Jesus knew that sooner or later they would get on each other's nerves and that their intimate fellowship would be jeopardized by petty jealousies, misunderstandings, contentions, and perhaps even by sharp personality clashes. In order to prevent this as much as possible for their own good as well as for the good of the Kingdom, He therefore

laid down for them in a few simple words the basic principle by which they were to be guided in their living, working, and worshiping together. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

"A new commandment I give unto you." But how could Jesus say that this was a new commandment? Was this not an old commandment, as old as the law of Moses in which God said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? At first glance this seems to be the case, but a closer examination reveals that Jesus is not speaking here of the love enjoined by the second table of the Law, that love which is to extend to all men, believers and unbelievers alike, even to our enemies who hate and persecute us. What He has in mind here in the Upper Room is a higher and more selective type of love, the love with which a true Christian loves his fellow Christians, who are united with him through faith and hope. This type of love, designated by the apostles as brotherly love, is new, as Jesus indicates, because it is patterned after His unique and wonderful love for His disciples.

Since brotherly love is patterned after the love of Jesus for His disciples, it is not to be regarded as a shallow, anemic, effeminate, effervescent emotion — the type of counterfeit love which has its roots in selfishness and is intent only upon its own gratification — a sort of hothouse plant which is easily hurt and wilts away quickly under the hot blasts of irritations and personal insults. No, brotherly love is one of the finest fruits of faith. It is manly,

robust, rugged. It is not interested in itself, but in its brethren in the faith and in the communion of saints. Generous and compassionate after the example of Jesus, it has no desire to receive, but to give, to comfort, to help, and to bless. Coupled with humility of spirit and sympathetic understanding, it is not easily offended or provoked, but remains patient, long-suffering, and charitable even when mistreated or rebuffed by others. It never rejoices in iniquity or in thinking or speaking evil about others, but rejoices in the truth, hopes for the best, and tries to put the best construction on everything. In short, brotherly love in the fellowship of believers is the reflection of the holy and compassionate character of Jesus and of His ministrations of divine love in the circle of His disciples.

Where do we of the Missouri Synod stand in this matter of brotherly love? What is our rating in the sight of God? Bear in mind, we are not to work individually and separately in building the kingdom of God on earth, but in company with our brethren in the faith. But this is not easy at times, for, like the Twelve, we all have our own background, our own personalities and temperaments, and often very definitely our own opinions. Moreover, we live in widely separated localities, do our work under altogether different conditions, and consequently have our own peculiar problems. Unless we are on our guard, the result is apt to be tension, misunderstandings, harsh judgments, and strife. Tennyson says in one of his poems, "Christian love among the churches is the twin of heathen

hate." He, of course, refers to the bitter contentions among the denominations, but his words can also be applied to situations obtaining within certain church bodies. "Christian love within the churches is the twin of heathen hate." These are hard words — not nearly as hard, however, as the sharp warning which St. Paul issued to the Galatian Christians, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another," Gal. 5:15. These words of the apostle show what is bound to happen within the church when its leaders and its people neglect to cultivate brotherly love.

Where then do we of the Missouri Synod stand in this matter of brotherly love? Thank God, by His unmerited grace brotherly love is still in evidence among us. Again and again we see beautiful manifestations of it, among our people and among our leaders as well. But there are also alarming symptoms — multiplying instances of arrogant behavior, slanderous gossip, harsh judgments, bitter contentions, and other kinds of unbrotherly conduct. While striving for soundness in doctrine and conformity to synodical regulations and developing ambitious programs of expansion, we apparently are losing sight of the importance of the new commandment to love one another even as Christ has loved us. And that is a terribly dangerous situation.

My brethren, let us act before it is too late. Let every one of us enter into judgment with himself, searching his own heart and examining his own conduct. We must rededicate ourselves individually and corporately to the cul-

tivation of brotherly love, genuine brotherly love patterned after the love of Jesus for those who are united with Him by faith.

Our own spiritual life demands this because brotherly love is an indispensable element in our spiritual growth. The welfare of the church demands this because brotherly love results in harmonious action, joyful co-operation, and in unity of the spirit among the builders of the kingdom of God, while the absence of brotherly love opens the doors of the church to the misunderstandings and suspicions, dissensions and schisms, by which the progress of the church is blocked and Christ is put to an open shame in the camps of His enemies. Christ demands this, for He wants us as members of His spiritual body to live, work, and worship together in the beautiful harmony of Christian love and compassion, demonstrating before all the world the sanctifying and saving power of that love divine, all love excelling which compelled Him to die for us on the cross.

Brethren, our commission is clear. Let us continue building the church, but let us make sure that we always work together in brotherly love.

UNDAUNTED BY THE POWERS OF HELL

Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt. 16:18.

Many good Christians, also in our Synod, are deeply concerned about the future of the church. And there is ample reason for this. The forces of evil are powerful and they are moving in upon the church with deep guile and

great might. Among these forces of evil there is Russian Communism, determined to exterminate Christianity from the face of the earth; liberal theology, which takes the heart out of the Gospel and reduces it to a moral code; pagan concepts of God and man and the universe resulting largely from the revolutionary advances in science and technology; the infiltration of wordliness in the church, and the compromising attitude of many Christian people and churches in regard to divine truth and basic moral principles. And in back of all these insidious and mighty forces of evil stands the big chief himself, the old serpent called the devil and Satan.

Under these circumstances, concern for the church is good and commendable. Such concern alerts us to the weaknesses, the perils, and the needs of the church and also provides a strong incentive toward action. But we dare never allow our concern to degenerate and harden into pessimism. Pessimism is a disease of the soul. It blights and paralyzes. By and by it results in inaction, compromise, and eventually even in complete surrender to the enemy.

Have you ever felt that you sensed a deep undercurrent of pessimism in the life of our church? On the surface we have a great deal of activity, glowing reports of our progress, ambitious planning for the future, bold declarations of our trust in God. But below the surface there seems to be, at least in certain areas, feelings and attitudes somewhat akin to pessimism. The result of these pessimistic tendencies is,

first, the absence of genuine missionary zeal, especially on the home front; second, compromise with un-Christian principles, notably in the area of Christian ethics.

But if we would build the kingdom of God successfully, we must keep our souls free from pessimism and cultivate a philosophy of Christian optimism — not the shallow, happy-go-lucky type of optimism which borders on irresponsibility, but an optimism that is realistic and firmly grounded in the promises of God.

Take the magnificent promise of Jesus in our text for instance. In response to a question by Jesus, Peter had made his great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thus Peter revealed himself to be a rock-man, a man standing upon the solid rock of God's supreme revelation that Jesus is His only-begotten Son and the Savior of all mankind. Thereupon Jesus uttered the memorable words, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." A majestic utterance! One of the greatest words Jesus ever spoke!

This then is the first great truth which must be fixed in our minds in connection with the problem we are considering: when we poor mortals build the kingdom of God on earth, we build something that is indestructible and everlasting, for all the forces of evil throughout the world and in the bottomless pits of hell are not powerful enough to destroy the church or to block its triumphal march through history, because it is built upon the solid,

impregnable Rock of Ages, Christ, the Son of the living God. Accordingly, we need not worry or become pessimistic about the future of the church. Christ has promised to take care of that, and He will do it.

But, says one, "All this plainly refers to the *Una Sancta*, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, we confess in the Apostles' Creed. But what about our own Synod and its future? Some of us are profoundly concerned about that."

The answer is obvious. We have no way at all of telling what the future holds in store for our Synod. We hope that under the blessing of God it will live and grow and flourish for a long, long time. But even if things should come to the worst and mighty forces of evil should succeed to destroy our synodical organization, reducing our colleges and seminaries, our churches and schools to rubble, scattering our people and laying their homes into ashes, one thing these hellish powers cannot touch — the immortal souls which we have saved by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. This beautiful spiritual edifice which we have built to the grace of God will stand forever. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Accordingly, our supreme concern as builders of the kingdom of God should be always and under all circumstances to build squarely and solidly upon Christ. That is the one thing needful. Doing this conscientiously and consistently, we need never be concerned about the church's future, particularly since we have the comfort of another

great truth which is implied in our text.

The second great truth which we as builders of the Kingdom must fix in our minds to forestall pessimism and fear is this: in building the kingdom of God we never work alone, but always in company with the most powerful institution on earth.

The fact that we are not working alone is brought home to us with great emphasis by our meeting together in this conference. Our brethren are here from all parts of the church, even from foreign lands, and still we find ourselves working together on a common program and toward a common goal. But we who are present here are merely the representatives of more than two million men, women, and children who, though far removed from us, are working and praying with us. Isn't this an inspiring thought and a powerful incentive toward bold and aggressive action in the best tradition of the Christian church?

But when we measure our Synod with its rather limited resources of manpower and material wealth against the mighty organizations of the world and the powerful champions of wickedness and unbelief, we frequently begin to feel very weak and insignificant anyway. When all is said and done, the fact remains that we are but a little flock, a mere handful of little people restricted in our endeavors by innumerable frustrating handicaps.

But aren't we forgetting something at this point? We certainly are. We are forgetting the *Una Sancta*, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of

saints — the "My church" to which Jesus refers when He says, "upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." We are forgetting that the Missouri Synod is never working alone in its effort to build the kingdom of God, but that the majestic Church Universal, composed of all true believers throughout the world, is constantly working with us and praying together with us, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

My brethren, the church of Jesus Christ, vibrant with the omnipotent Spirit of God, is the most powerful institution on earth. Even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Supported by her labors and her prayers, we cannot fail in our efforts to build the kingdom of God provided we ourselves are built securely upon Christ our Savior, the impregnable Rock of Ages. Thank God that we know this to be true.

INSTANT IN PRAYER

Continuing instant in prayer. Rom. 12:12.

When our Synod celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1922, the committee in charge had appointed a staff of lecturers who upon invitation were to speak to our congregations on the early history of the Missouri Synod. My congregation in Virginia had the good fortune to have as its lecturer a very interesting and scholarly man from Baltimore, the Rev. D. H. Steffens. Knowing that he had during the war worked together with the pastor of the

United Lutheran Church in our town, I took him over to the ULC parsonage for a visit with his old friend. After a hearty greeting, the latter said, "And what brings you here?" "I am lecturing at our church tonight." "What are you lecturing on?" "I am lecturing on 'Lights and Shadows in the History of the Missouri Synod.'" "That surprises me," said our ULC friend, "I didn't know that there were any shadows in the history of the Missouri Synod." Then Pastor Steffens said something which I have never forgotten. "Indeed there are shadows in the history of the Missouri Synod," he said; "the lights are what God has done for the Missouri Synod, the shadows are what the Missouri Synod has tried to do by itself."

"The shadows are what the Missouri Synod has tried to do by itself." What a message these words bring to us today as we are about to close our conference!

For the past week we have been hard at work as representatives of our Synod, preparing ourselves to discharge the heavy responsibilities which will confront us through the coming year. Mindful of our mistakes and failures in the past, we have in the light of the Word of God studied our problems and our opportunities, checked our material and spiritual resources, made ambitious plans for the coming year, and adopted a budget to provide the necessary funds. What lies ahead of us is a tremendous task, particularly in view of its far-reaching spiritual implications. We cannot do this work without God. We do not want to do it without God. At the same time, we cannot expect

God to help and bless us unless we ask Him to do so. Hence this little word of St. Paul as a parting admonition — "Continue instant in prayer."

But let us take a good look at these words to see what they really mean.

St. Paul exhorted the Christians at Rome to *continue* instant in prayer. Prayer was nothing new for these people. They had been praying all along and had learned from experience that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. We too have been praying individually and as a church, and God has answered our prayers far beyond anything that we could ask or think. The history of our Synod is a glorious sequence of heavenly benedictions. God has blessed us, and He has blessed our work. In spite of our ingratitude and unfaithfulness, He has kept us in the faith, sustained us in the day of trouble, guided us through great emergencies, granted us a phenomenal growth in membership and material resources as well as unlimited opportunities for service, making us a blessing to untold thousands to the uttermost parts of the earth. For this we praise and magnify His holy name today.

But let us also today solemnly resolve in the presence of God to continue instant in prayer. If our heart is in our work as builders of the Kingdom, then we will also pray for it. We will pray for ourselves — that we may develop into better Christians and better workers; for our work — that God's blessing may rest upon it; for the church — that it may grow and prosper and embrace the ends of the earth; for all in the

bondage of unbelief and wickedness — that they may be drawn to the Cross of Christ and be saved. We will pray for the extension of the Kingdom and the salvation of immortal souls in our private devotions and with our families, in the meetings we attend, and in the services of our congregations. In short, our work as builders of the kingdom of God will always be included in our prayers, and that not only in a general way, but again and again in very specific terms.

St. Paul's concept of prayer goes deeper than that, however. If we study our text carefully, especially in connection with other passages like 1 Thess. 5:17, "Pray without ceasing," we will discover that in his thinking the prayer life of a Christian includes far more than prayers offered at intervals at stated times and places. The Authorized Version brings this out clearly, but its language is obsolete in this verse and obscures the meaning for most readers. The Revised Standard Version, "Continue constant in prayer," does not reproduce Paul's thought in its fullness; and Phillips fails to grasp the deeper meaning when he translates, "Steadily maintain regular habits of prayer." The apostle regarded prayer as a steady, unbroken continuity of a Christian speaking to God, throbbing with urgency and requiring continuous effort. Here we are reminded of what Luther said in the first sentence of his Ninety-five Theses — that the life of a Christian should be a continuous and uninterrupted repentance. Just so, the life of a Christian should be a continuous and uninterrupted prayer —

among other things, also a continuous and uninterrupted prayer for God's blessing upon the work which he is doing as God's workman commissioned to build His kingdom on earth.

What a wonderful thing it would be if we would today return to our fields of labor with firm determination to become proficient in this manner of praying, at all times carrying our responsibility for bringing salvation to others upon compassionate hearts engaged in prayer!

However, there is another important truth in our text, a truth which comes to light the moment we study the text in its context. St. Paul has been speaking to the Christians at Rome about their living and working and worshipping together in intimate fellowship as members of the body of Christ. In this hallowed relationship they are to continue instant in prayer. What does this mean? First of all, it means, of course, that they were to pray together as a congregation. But it also means that the corporate life and work and worship of the congregation should be a steady, uninterrupted continuity of prayer, throbbing with the holy urgency born of a common faith in Christ and a common love and hope. The congregation in Rome was to be not only a believing congregation, a witness-bearing congregation, a working congregation, but also a praying congregation — and that not only on the first day of the week, but day after day, month after month, year in and year out — a fountainhead of ceaseless prayer and praise.

Judge for yourselves, my brethren,

whether our Synod measures up to the high standards which St. Paul set for his congregation in Rome.

But the hour for the adjournment of our conference is almost upon us, and we must gird ourselves for the work which lies ahead. Let us proceed in the name of God. With eternity in our minds, faith in our hearts, and the Gospel upon our lips, let us work

together in brotherly love, undaunted by the powers of hell, always remembering to call upon God for His help. He will never fail us, neither will we ever come short of His blessings. As we go, we hear a voice from heaven, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore . . . and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Vespers

By GERHARDT E. NITZ

I. WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

(Scripture Reading: John 13:1-16)

James T. Adams, the noted American historian, once wrote this: "Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, halt every motor, and stop all activities some day, to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what life is all about, on what they really want, on why they are living."

We have come together here at Valparaiso University in these days to think about this question, "What is it all about?" We haven't been able to stop the telephone from ringing, we haven't been able to halt the traffic on Highway 30, we haven't even been able to cease all our activities. Yet we are thinking about why we are here. We are thinking about the purpose of our lives and of our ministry. We are thinking about what we really want out of life. We have come together from our busy parishes and our fields of activity to rethink the basic foundations of our faith as they are given to us in the Word of God. We have come together to think about the purpose of the church in the world today.

In the Gospel according to St. John, the 13th chapter, we have what might be called the biography of our Lord. There, in the third verse, we read: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God" — did what? We would expect

it to read on this way — "He then sat down upon the throne of His glory and allowed His disciples to serve Him," but that *isn't* what it says at all. Instead, "He arose from supper and He took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples' feet." What amazing humility! What glorious service!

But these words, which in brief form give us the biography of our Lord, also apply to every Christian and especially to every Christian minister. *We* have come from God. *This* is why we are here. *This* is what life is all about. It wasn't of our own choice that we were born. It wasn't by our decision that we came into the world at just this particular juncture of the world's history. This was *God's* doing. It was by His creative power and by His life-giving action that you and I came from Him into the world.

And our new life as Christians came from God too. We were born again solely by His grace. It wasn't this, that God looked around over the great mass of humanity in the world and here and there saw certain people who were trying harder to live Christian lives than others, or certain people who stood out head and shoulders above the others in morality. It wasn't that at all. There was nothing lovely or lovable about us. There wasn't anything that could recommend us to God or make Him love us. The Bible says: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." But God loved us anyway,

and because He set His love upon us in Jesus Christ, we now *go* to God. Heaven is our home. We look forward to the glorious inheritance of the saints in light.

But in the meantime, in this interval between coming from God and going to God, what are we to do? We are to do exactly what Jesus did, as described in this text. We are to serve the disciples of our Lord. Sometimes we get the impression that the congregation is there to serve *us*. They're to carry out our own ideas or programs for our advantage. Sometimes we build little kingdoms to advance our own power and glory. But just as Jesus came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, even so we, too, must wait upon those whom God has given us.

Very often this can be quite difficult. Maybe we have a board of elders that doesn't always go along with the pastor's plans. Maybe they can't always see how progressive and intelligent his programs are. Perhaps we have a ladies' aid that is constantly bickering and quarreling. Sometimes we would like to take a club and beat some sense into the heads of our delinquents, those who are careless and indifferent to every effort made to remind them of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We would like to thunder at them with the Law and wake them up to the needs of their souls. Yet that won't work at all. That isn't what Jesus did to His disciples.

There's a verse here that I love very much. I know you do too. Of the

Lord Jesus we read: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end*." No labor was too difficult, no suffering too hard, no sacrifice too great to save and to serve His own. He loved the last and the least of the lost.

And His example of humble, lowly, loving service shows us how we must minister to our congregations. We must love them to the end and serve them. We must point them to the cross and tell them how much Jesus loved them. We must remind them again and again that He has washed them every whit and made them clean. In true humility we must remember that as His servants we are not greater than our Lord. We who are sent are not greater than He that sent us.

Yes, we *know* whence we have come and where we are headed and what life is all about. We *know* the message of love that we are to proclaim in His name. This is our task and our glorious privilege. Let's get at it!

II

"GOD'S WORD IS OUR GREAT HERITAGE"

(Scripture Reading: Ps. 119:41-48)

Clarence McCartney, the late great Presbyterian minister of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, once related this story. On a journey to the Pacific Coast he stopped off on a Saturday night at Fargo, North Dakota. The next morning he wanted to attend church services. But the Presbyterian church was closed during the summer months, and so he happened to notice a beautiful Norwegian Lutheran church nearby. He slipped into a rear seat and heard

just the concluding part of the sermon. Then the congregation joined in the closing hymn, which was sung to the melody of Luther's great "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The words of the hymn were these:

God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations.

As he listened to the words of this great hymn, he said to himself, "That's all that the church really has! God's Word is indeed our great heritage. This is all that we have to guide us in life, it's all that we have to support us in the hour of death. To spread this Word throughout the world to all generations is all Christ has given His church to do." He was right, wasn't he?

We've been thinking and talking a great deal today about our heritage in the Word of God. We've been reminding ourselves again of its truthfulness and utter reliability. We've been studying those passages in 2 Timothy and Colossians which call attention to the divine authorship of these epistles. We've been getting a clearer understanding of what the terms "verbal inspiration" and "revelation" really mean. We've been gaining a deeper appreciation of God's loving-kindness in revealing Himself to man. In humility and reverence, awe and amazement we've been allowing that Word to speak to *our* hearts to convict us of sin and to lead us to Christ for

forgiveness and the power of a new life in the Spirit.

But we must be sure that the heritage to which we cling is truly *God's* Word. We must be sure that the heritage we pass on to others is in fact the divine revelation through which the Holy Spirit works to lead men from darkness to light, to translate them from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God.

During World War II the British Broadcasting Co. frequently beamed news programs into the occupied countries of Europe. The people there repeatedly risked their lives to listen to the truths about the progress of the war of liberation. As a result, a sign was posted in the announcer's booth in London. This is what it said: "Is what you are saying worth having a man lose his life to listen?"

Perhaps a sign like that ought to be posted in the pulpits of all of our thousands of churches across the country. What we are saying will *not* be *worth anything* if we are only proclaiming our own ideas about God and the way to heaven. What we are saying will cause men to lose their lives and their eternal souls, if we are preaching merely our own cleverly thought-out messages and carefully constructed conjectures about God. Only as we lift high the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ will men be drawn unto it; only as we break the Bread of Life will the multitudes go away satisfied in their souls; only as we preach the Word will men willingly risk their lives to listen to us.

But this great heritage of God's Word

will not automatically be ours forever. If we do not appreciate what we have in the Bible, if we do not cling to it, if we do not share it with others, then we will lose it. The history of the church shows that this has happened before and that it *can happen again*. It has happened to other denominations, and it can happen here in the Missouri Synod too.

For example, it hurts to stand on the site of the great temples of Solomon and Herod in Jerusalem and to see there a great Mohammedan mosque, the Dome of the Rock. Or you can go to the top of the Mount of Olives and visit that sacred place which tradition points out as the site of our Lord's ascension into heaven. As a Christian, you will again be disappointed to find there, not a church dedicated to our Lord but a mosque dedicated to the worship of Allah. Or visit Mount Zion, and the guide will show you a building supposedly erected on the very spot where our Lord celebrated His Last Supper with His disciples.

Again you will find a Mohammedan mosque and nearby the tomb of David, which is revered by Jewish people all over the world as one of their most sacred shrines. Or visit Constantinople, once the great center of orthodox Christianity. Enter the Basilica of St. Sophia, one of the most ancient of Christian churches, and you will be disappointed to notice that the Christian mosaics honoring our Lord have been painted over, and instead, huge signs announce in Arabic that "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet."

What happened to the Christian churches which once flourished in all these places? They lost their first love. They gave up their heritage of the Word. They followed the cunningly devised fables of men rather than the truth of the Gospel. And professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Having changed the truth of God into a lie, they worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.

Don't say, "That won't happen to us." Don't say, "We're immune to false doctrine." Don't say, "We've had the Word of God so long we will never give it up." Our Lord plainly told His disciples: "If ye *continue* in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth." God grant, then, that we may continue to read that Word, study that Word, believe that Word, and practice that Word. Only then can we be sure that we know the truth revealed by God. And only then will we be free — free from sin and Satan, and hell and death, and free to enter heaven by our Savior's merit.

III. "LEST I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY"

(Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 9:12-27)

Many years ago a tract appeared in German with the intriguing title, "Can a Pastor Also Be Saved?" That title shocks you, doesn't it? It's like a slap in the face! It's like being doused with a bucket of cold water!

We feel like answering, "Well, if *anybody* is going to be saved, it ought to be *us*." Think of the great privileges we have had in our education. We

have had the opportunity to spend years in studying for the ministry. We have had the opportunity to be under the Word and under the influence of the Holy Spirit all of our lives. Our church has spent great sums of money in educating us to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ. Ever since we entered the ministry, we have been dealing with this message of salvation constantly. Why, we even get paid for the privilege of ministering to the souls of men, of visiting the sick, of spending our time doing the Lord's work. Our whole life is devoted to sacred things.

And yet, just *because* of this, Paul says, there is a danger that we ourselves "might become castaways." In the closing verses of this ninth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians he is using some illustrations taken from the great athletic contests. It sounds almost like a track meet. One can almost hear the familiar cry, "Get on your marks, get set, go." Then suddenly one of the contestants is disqualified and ruled off the track. It happened just the other day in the Olympic Games at Rome. One of the members of our American relay team broke a rule, and the entire team was disqualified and their record wiped from the books. The apostle is here telling us that this same danger threatens us. Having preached to others, we ourselves can become castaways.

Now, I don't know how it is with your heart, friend. I can't look into it. But I can look into my own heart, and you can look into yours, and God knows them all. And when I look into my own heart, then I know that it is

possible that a man *can* be disqualified in spite of having preached the Gospel to others.

The old proverb says, "Familiarity breeds contempt." We can handle sacred things so much that finally our hands get calloused to them. We can pray so much with others, at the sick bed or in the home, that our prayers become perfunctory and we forget about praying for ourselves. When we stand before the altar of God's house on Sunday morning, we can spend so much time wondering whether we turned the right way or made the sign of the cross at the proper place or whether there's a wrinkle in our surplice, that we actually forget that we are standing before God and leading others in worship.

We can read the Bible in preparing for a talk or a sermon and forget to let God's words speak to our own hearts to convict us of sin and to point us to Christ. We deal with holy things so much that we begin to think we can take liberties with the Word of God. We sometimes feel that its warnings don't apply to us, simply because we know them so well. The freshness and the bloom of the Gospel can be lost through carelessness and indifference. A living faith may begin to die. A tender conscience may become hardened by constant neglect of the truth.

Furthermore, a minister may become a castaway, not only in spite of preaching to others but *because* he preaches to others. A preacher is a forth-giver. There is an old Gospel song which says, "If you've had a blessing shown, pass it on." And so the preacher may

get into the habit of passing all the truth on to others. When he discovers something in Scripture, he may say, "What a wonderful idea for next Sunday," instead of applying it to himself and saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

While a collection is being taken in church, the safest place to be is in the pulpit. The collection plate never reaches the person there. And so, when some hard warning message from God's Word is being proclaimed, the safest place to be is in the pulpit. That can be a kind of sanctuary for us.

There is, of course, only one remedy for this. When we urge our people to read the Word of God for their encouragement and instruction, we must read it for *ourselves* and for our salvation. When we direct our people to "that green hill far away, outside a city wall, where Christ our Lord was crucified, who died to save us all," we must go with them to kneel there in penitence and faith so that the Savior's mercy may cleanse *our* souls.

When we urge others to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," we must be sure that we ourselves take a good, long look at Him and by the Spirit's power see Him as *our* Redeemer. When we preach to others, we must be certain that we are first of all preaching to *our own* hearts. When we pray for others, we must be terribly sure that we are also praying for ourselves. When we lead others in worship, we must realize that we ourselves are beholding a vision of the glory of the Lord in His holy temple so that we

may always worship Him "in spirit and in truth."

In this way alone can we be certain that we do not become pious hypocrites, mouthing wonderful words of life, which we ourselves neither believe nor understand. In this way alone can we receive God's absolute guarantee of grace and peace in Christ Jesus. Then with the apostle we will be persuaded that, having preached to others, we ourselves will *not* be castaways on the great Day of Judgment.

IV. "THE CHURCH DOTTH STAND"

(Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-18)

An author relates that he once had an opportunity to speak to one of the colorful characters of the wild early days of the great state of Texas, a man called Shanghai Pierce. On one occasion he decided to introduce religion to the 200,000-acre ranch which he owned, and so he built a small church. One day a visitor asked him: "Do you belong to this church?" Stripped of his profanity, his violent answer was: "No! that church belongs to me!"

Sometimes our lay people get the idea that the church belong to *them*. They speak about "my church" in exactly the same way they speak about "my house," "my car," "my country club." They feel that the church is there merely to promote their happiness and advance their pleasure.

And preachers, too, get the idea that the church belongs to them. They feel that the church exists merely for their support or to provide a new parsonage for the Mrs. when she wants it. The church is there merely to promote their

advancement and carry out their program. The church provides a wonderful platform from which they can call attention to their own genius in raising money or erecting buildings or organizing clubs.

But in our Scripture lesson our Lord Jesus clearly points out that it is "*His* church." *He* is the Head, we are only the followers. His Word is our message. His will is our program. His aim of saving souls must be our aim too.

If our churches really belong to Christ, then they will be houses of worship and prayer, centers of real Christian service to souls, and powerhouses for the advancement of mission work in all the world. If our churches really belong to Him, then we will not be interested in activism for its own sake, but we will be interested in Spirit-directed, God-motivated, Christ-glorifying service to keep those who are His close to Him through Word and sacrament, and to channel and direct their energies so that they may gain others for Him.

If you travel through Europe and the Near East, you'll soon discover that most of the churches are just cemeteries where great statesmen, warriors, and churchmen of the past lie buried. Or you will find that they are merely historical monuments, commemorating some great movement or achievement or success of the past.

We don't want our churches to be like that. Christ doesn't want *His* church to be like that. God knows that we have enough dead people, spiritually dead people, in our churches now. We've already buried too many of our

high hopes and great visions and wonderful dreams. Nor do we want our churches just to be monuments to the sacrifice and consecrated effort of our forefathers. If the church really belongs to Christ, then it is a going concern operated by the Holy Spirit with the sole purpose of destroying Satan's kingdom and winning the world to Christ.

Perhaps on your vacation trip you saw a sign in some restaurant or gas station that said: "If you have nothing to do, don't do it here." What a wonderful motto that is for the church! Somehow we have gotten the idea that the church is just a dining room where the faithful may gather and feast on God's blessings and grow sleek and fat. Instead it is a kitchen where these blessings are prepared and then dispensed to hungry and needy souls everywhere. The church of Christ is not a rest home but a factory.

And since the church belongs to Christ, "even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There are many things that are falling in our day and age. Maybe they *ought* to fall. Let them fall! But there are some things that are going to stand. And no matter what happens, they *will stand*. The church of Christ is one of them. The Word of God is another. And our hope of heaven is a third. "Even though the heavens shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the things that are therein shall be consumed," *these things are going to endure*. "Built on the rock, the church doth stand, even when steeples are falling."

When the American soldiers in World War II marched into Cologne, Germany, they saw great desolation everywhere. Factories, banks, shops, warehouses, homes, schools, universities — all had disappeared. But there stood the twin spires of the great cathedral still pointing heavenward, unhurt and unscarred in the midst of destruction. What a reminder that must have been to them of the endurance of the Christian church and the indestructibility of the kingdom of God!

Yes, Christ's church is going to stand! Hell and the devil can never win. And if by grace we have been called out of darkness into this church, then *we* are going to stand *too*, now and forever.

V. "DEBT WE MAY NOT CHOOSE BUT PAY"

(Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 24:15-24)

Did you get the message? In punishment for their sins God sends a terrible pestilence upon the Children of Israel, and seventy thousand men die. The deadly plague travels as far as the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. There it stops. Thereupon a messenger comes to King David and says: "Go and rear an altar unto the Lord, and give thanks to Him that He has shown mercy." By this time David has learned his lesson, and so he obeys the word of the Lord.

When Araunah sees the king and his servants coming toward him, he runs out to meet them, bows down on the ground before the king, and offers to give the king his oxen in order that he might render a thank offering to the Lord. It is then that David makes a

very significant statement. He says: "No, Araunah, I cannot accept your gift. Let me buy these animals from you. For I cannot offer a sacrifice unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing." If Araunah were to donate everything for the burnt offering, then it would be *his* sacrifice, not David's. In other words, a sacrifice must *cost us* something.

Is that the way it is with *our* sacrifices for the Lord? Isn't it true that our people are giving the Lord only leftovers? After they have paid the payment on their house and their automobile and their television set, after all other obligations have been taken care of, then they give what is left to the Lord. And after our own local congregations have paid all of their bills, provided themselves with new church buildings, schools, and parsonages, then we give what we have left over to Synod.

We have spent much time these days talking about the world mission program of the church. We've all been thinking about what we can do to reach this year's budget. We're wondering how we are going to stir up our people so that they will meet the accepted goal for next year. I think the answer lies in this little word "sacrifice." A sacrifice, if it is to be a *sacrifice*, must cost us something.

I know that preachers usually do not like to preach about money. When it comes time to deliver the annual budget sermon, we shrink back from it. We know that our people don't like to hear it. On the fifth Sunday after Easter, when we preach about prayer,

people go out the door after the service, and they say, "Pastor, that was a wonderful sermon this morning. We ought to hear more about the subject of prayer. We don't pray as often or as earnestly or as fervently as we should." But when we preach about stewardship, dead silence and a stony stare greet us at the door.

And yet someone has figured out by actual count of the verses involved, that our Lord spoke about the stewardship of life five times more often than He ever did about prayer. Now, if we preached *five* sermons about money to every *one* about prayer, I suppose that more of us would be looking for a call to another field. And yet we are to declare the whole counsel of God to our people, and that surely includes pointing out to them not only their blessings as children of God but also their obligations and responsibilities to His kingdom.

Maybe what happened to one preacher has also happened to you. One Sunday morning a member went to him at the door and said: "I just want you to know that I'm sick and tired of it. That's all you preachers know how to preach any more. All I ever hear from the pulpit is 'Give! Give! Give!'" The pastor stood there for a moment silently thinking and then said with a smile: "My friend, I want to thank you for the finest definition of the Christian religion that I have ever heard."

That's it, isn't it? That's exactly what God has been doing for us from all eternity. And that's exactly what He is going to be doing for us through all

eternity. He's been giving us of His mercy and grace, giving us of His love and kindness every day of our life. And this is exactly what we are to be doing for Him and for our fellow man all the time. Willingly and cheerfully we are to give ourselves, our time, our talents, and our possessions for the work of His church.

Somebody once said, "That preacher always has his hand in my pocket." Wait a minute, brother! Whose pocket is that? Take another look. That's not your pocket, that's God's pocket. He owns everything. He owns you. You owe everything to Him. Psalm 24 says: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" If what you possess can be taken away from you by death, it isn't yours at all, it's God's.

And then take another look at that hand. That's not the preacher's hand. That hand has a nail mark in it. It's the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is only asking you to give back to Him a portion of what He originally gave to you.

Our real problem is not how to get money out of people but how to get the spirit and the love of Christ into them. And so we have to come back to the proper motivation. And here again the key word is "sacrifice." Not *our* sacrifice but *Christ's* sacrifice in our behalf. Surely here was a sacrifice that cost something! It cost God His own Son to redeem us. It cost Christ His own life, the life of the Only-begotten of the Father, to buy us back from the consequences of our sins.

"What?" you say. "Do you mean to tell us that the greatest and the highest and the most wonderful thing that we can ever learn about God is a poor Jew, hanging on a cross, forsaken by His friends, hated by His own people, despised by His Roman enemies, and dying in the dark?" Yes, my friends, it is. Because, you see, this *proves* God loves me, this *proves* my sins have been truly forgiven, this *proves* the price has been paid for my redemption, this *proves* I have peace with God and that heaven is my home.

And so here we have the only right

motivation for giving to the Lord's kingdom or for anything else that we do in the church. It is summed up in these words: "We love Him because He first loved us." If we preach this "old, old message of Jesus and His love," then our people are going to say with David: "I cannot make a sacrifice to the Lord, my God, of that which doth cost me nothing." Compelled by His constraining love, they will not feel that they *have* to give, but they will *want* to give their all for the praise and glory of His name and the salvation of blood-bought souls.

Revelation — Scripture — Interpretation

By MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

The topic assigned to me is "Scripture, with Due Attention to Current Issues." But if we are to deal profitably with the subject of the Scripture, we must begin with the subject of revelation. For we are dealing with *Sacred Scripture*, with the *Holy Bible* and its use in the church, with the one book that can be called the "believed book." And what makes it holy, sacred, "believed" is the fact that here we meet God's revelation; here He speaks to us and deals with us. We cannot therefore speak of Scripture without speaking of revelation, all the more so since current discussions of Scripture center in the relationship between Scripture and revelation.

I. REVELATION

A. *Revelation Is God's Free, Personal Act*

Revelation is God's act. God discloses Himself to man and deals with man personally. Both in the revelation of His wrath and in the revelation of His grace He enters into man's life and determines man's life. This action is wholly God's action, and it is His alone. Man contributes nothing toward it and cannot in any way control it. The line of action runs always from God to man, never from man to God. Matt. 16:13-27; 11:25-30; 13:11; Rom. 1:19; Rev. 1:1; Gal. 1:11-16; 1 Cor. 2:9, 10; Eph. 1:17, 18.

The act of revelation is solely and wholly God's act. The story of Peter's

confession at Caesarea Philippi makes this plain (Matt. 16:13-27). At Caesarea Philippi Jesus takes the initiative, not the disciples; *He* calls forth the confession to Himself as the Christ. He pronounces Peter "blessed" for His confession; and "blessed" means, first and foremost, that man has received a gift from God (cf. Matt. 5:3-6). Jesus makes it clear to Peter that God has given him what flesh and blood could not give him, what his father Jonah did not give him (Matt. 16:17). Peter had contributed nothing to this act of revelation; and when Peter tried to control God's revelation by protesting against the thought of a Christ who suffers and dies, Jesus called him Satan and bade him take a disciple's place, *behind* Him (Matt. 16:23). When man tries to take a hand in revelation, he is on the side of the enemy; he is succumbing to the old temptation of "You will be like God." RSV

Jesus thanks His Father for the sovereign grace of His revelation (Matt. 11:25, 26). In revealing Himself through His Son, God has given His revelation to "the simple," "the babes," and has withheld it from the "wise"; such was His good pleasure. God's grace in revelation needs no man's greatness in order to be effectual; here, too, His strength is made perfect in weakness. The babes receive freely what the wise in their wisdom refuse. God asserts His freedom in revelation; no man is so great

that God needs him, and no man is so small that God will not seek him (Schlatter). The revelation of His grace remains purely His gift. (Matt. 13:11; cf. Rev. 1:1)

Even what we call "natural" revelation is in no sense something in which man has a hand. It is not man's attainment but God's doing. What can be known of God is manifest among men because *God manifested it to them* by His works since the creation of the world (Rom. 1:19). And God's revelation of His wrath makes it doubly clear that here man is not being consulted; God's revelation reaches man just when man thinks he has escaped it. God's wrath is revealed upon impious and unrighteous men who seek to suppress the truth. (Rom. 1:18)

The example of Paul, the instrument of the Lord's revelation, His chosen vessel to bear His name abroad (Acts 9:15), is instructive. Paul insists that his Gospel is not something that lies on a human level (Gal. 1:11), not something that a man can receive from a human instructor (Gal. 1:12). The revelation that gave him this Gospel was not prepared for by anything in Paul; on the contrary, Paul was in vehement opposition up to the very moment of revelation (Gal. 1:13, 14). It was the free grace of God, the grace of the God who chose out Paul before his birth, that revealed God's Son to him. The call of God that reached Paul and turned him completely around was wholly and solely God's doing (Gal. 1:15, 16). God's revelation, Paul says, brings to the eye of man what man has not seen, to the ear of man what man

has not heard, and into the heart of man what the human heart has not conceived (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). God's Spirit, the creative power of God, is in the act of revelation (1 Cor. 2:10). The Spirit's possibilities begin where human possibilities end.

Revelation is solely God's act; and it is His act all the way. The given gift of revelation remains with man only by God's continual giving. Man never becomes independent over against God. Paul prays in his letter to the Ephesians that God may grant to the elect saints who have received the wondrous revelation of God's comprehensive grace (Eph. 1:3-14) the spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightened eyes of the heart, in order that the given gift may remain theirs and be a working reality in their lives. (Eph. 1:17, 18)

All this may seem obvious and beyond argument. But it needs to be stressed today. Current theological literature still speaks of prophets and apostles as great religious discoverers, as religious geniuses, although the idea of the religious genius is wholly foreign to the Bible. It would be difficult indeed to find in the Bible itself any evidence for the definition of "inspiration" (which is so intimately connected with revelation) advanced by an eminent British scholar: "Inspiration . . . is the capacity to explore independently the regions of the spirit and to convince others of the reality of that which one has discovered." (Dodd)

In thus revealing Himself to man, God is dealing with man, is entering into man's life effectually, and is shap-

ing man's life. When the Father reveals the Christ, the Son of the living God, to Peter and his fellow disciples, their whole life is changed by that revelation (Matt. 16:11-27). They are separated forever from "men" who appreciate Jesus and honor Him as prophet (Matt. 16:13-15) but will not see in Him the Christ, the Son of the living God. They are henceforth committed to the Christ, the anointed king; they are His subjects destined to live under Him in His kingdom. In Jesus they have come face to face with the living God, the Lord of men's lives, the Lord of all history. Jesus calls them "blessed"; "blessed" means that a personal, religious bond, a bond of grace, has been established. Jesus calls men blessed when God deals with them, enriching the beggar, comforting the mourner, giving the world to the meek as his inheritance, feeding full the man who hungers and thirsts for righteousness (Matt. 5:3-6). This revelation given by the Father means that the disciple enters into the new people of God, the church (Matt. 16:18). It means that he is drawn into God's own redeeming activity; he is given the keys of the Kingdom, to loose and to bind (Matt. 16:19). It means that the disciple is to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. He must lose his life in order to gain it, give up all dreams of greatness, and face the returning Son of Man as his Judge. (Matt. 16:24-27)

When Jesus tells men that He, the Son, can reveal the Father (Matt. 11:27) because He alone knows the Father, neither "knowing" nor "reveal-

ing" means mere information about God. It means communion with God. The Revealer summons men to Himself and promises them rest (Matt. 11:28). He lays His kindly yoke on men and puts their burdened, harassed lives in order. (Matt. 11:29, 30)

When God revealed His Son to Paul, He graciously laid claim to Paul's whole life, his work, and his suffering (Gal. 1:16; cf. Acts 9:15). What God reveals to men, Paul says, is what God's grace has bestowed on undeserving men, a gift from God which creates men who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9, 12). The Spirit of revelation makes men *know* God personally — they know what a hope and what an inheritance God has given them; and they know the power of God which will bring them through all darkness and danger into that inheritance. (Eph. 1:17-19)

B. Revelation Is a Constant Action of God

No man ever escapes from God the Revealer. God's hand holds man fast, either in sin, under wrath, unto death; or in Christ, under grace, unto life eternal. Revelation, whether as Law or as Gospel, is a constant reality in the life of man. Rom. 1:18-32; Rom. 3:21 with 1:17; the perfect tense in 1 Cor. 15:4 and Gal. 3:1; 1 Thess. 2:13; Paul's use of "in Christ."

No man escapes the Revealer. There is a deep and terrible irony in Rom. 1:18-32, where Paul speaks of God's universal revelation of Himself. Just when man thinks himself free from God, when man has turned his back upon God and refuses to glorify and thank Him, just then he is taken in hand by

God and must still face the revelation of God's wrath. God delivers up man — three times this fearful word is spoken — God delivers man up to the very sin which man seeks and makes man feel the hand of God in the shame and agony of the way which he has chosen.

But if the revelation of God's wrath is a reality which is constant and inescapable, so also the revelation of His grace is constant and persistent. The righteousness of God *has been* revealed once for all in the cross and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 3:21). The righteousness of God, the free gift of His forgiveness, is *being* revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:17); God's great revealing action is present, continual, and active in the proclamation of that action. It is *there*, at work in the world.

Paul can express this continually present character of the past revealing action of God by his use of the Greek perfect tense. This tense emphasizes the fact that a completed action has enduring results; for example, the normal Greek way of saying "the man is dead" is "the man *has died*."

In 1 Cor. 15:3, 4 Paul gives a brief summary of the Gospel which he has preached to the Corinthians; he speaks of Christ's death for our sins, of His burial, and of His resurrection. In speaking of the death and burial of Christ Paul used the aorist tense, which simply states that an event took place at a point in the past — "Christ died . . . He was buried." But when he speaks of Christ's resurrection, he uses the perfect tense; he is speaking to men who, in denying the resurrection of the dead

who die in Christ, are denying the enduring result of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is not "over" because it occurred in the past; God's revelation of Himself in His act of raising Jesus Christ from the dead is continually present in the Gospel through which men are being delivered from death. (1 Cor. 15:2)

Similarly Paul in Gal. 3:1, by speaking of Christ's crucifixion in the perfect tense, emphasizes the fact that the cross is not simply "over" because it is past. The cross never becomes obsolete or expendable; it continues to dominate the life of the church, so that the thought of any merit of man or any glory of man is impossible in the church, hidden as it is under the cross. The Gospel facts are enduring, continually working facts; the apostolic Word which proclaims these facts is therefore a divine Word which is continually at work in the believers. (1 Thess. 2:13)

Paul's use of "in Christ" (or "in the Lord") is another striking instance of this continually present character of revelation. God has revealed Himself in Christ once for all: in Him God's grace, God's love, God's goodness have manifested themselves (2 Tim. 2:1; Rom. 8:39; Eph. 2:7). In Christ God has said yes to all His promises (2 Cor. 1:19, 20). In Christ God has delivered men (2 Tim. 2:10), has justified (Gal. 2:17), reconciled (2 Cor. 5:19), redeemed (Rom. 3:24), created (Eph. 2:10), and effectually called them. (Phil. 3:14)

And this "in Christ" is a reality and a power which colors and controls the

whole existence of the Christian. Paul the Christian is "a man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2); Christians are saints and brothers "in Christ" (Phil. 1:1, 14). Christian activity is an activity in Christ; the preacher of the Gospel fathers children in Christ (1 Cor. 4:15), and the opening-up of missionary opportunity is a "door opened in the Lord" (2 Cor. 2:12). All aspects of the Christian life are "in Christ"; a man is a prisoner, or he rejoices, "in the Lord" (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:4). Christian duties such as the obedience of the Christian wife or of Christian children are duties "in the Lord" (Col. 3:18, 20). The stages of Christian life are likewise marked — men are little children or mature men "in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1; Col. 1:28). Not even death can break the gracious hold of the hand of God: the dead are dead "in Christ." (1 Thess. 4:16)

C. God's Revelation Culminates in Christ

The revelation under which and by which the church lives and works is the culminating revelation of God in Christ (Heb. 1:1, 2). In this revelation God discloses Himself fully as Father and effectually calls man into communion with Himself (Luke 15:11-32; John 1:12; Matt. 11:25-30), a communion which shall be fully known and enjoyed at the return of the Son of Man and the close of the age (Matt. 25:34, cf. v. 41; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 21:22; 22:3-5). This crowning revelation in Jesus Christ does not cancel or annul God's other and earlier revelation but confirms it. What God willed in manifesting Himself in His works since the creation of the world, namely, that men should

glorify Him as God and give thanks to Him, is fulfilled in Jesus and in the new people of God who call Jesus Lord (Rom. 1:21; 1 Peter 2:9). The Gospel makes the Law to stand (Matt. 5:17 f.; Rom. 3:31) by affirming the Law's verdict on man (Rom. 3:20), by accepting its witness (Rom. 3:21), and by asserting its good and holy will (Rom. 8:4). And the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's yea to all His promises (2 Cor. 1:19, 20). Man comes to the revelation of God as Father from the revelation of God as Judge. His life of repentance and faith in the church is a continual flight from God the Judge to God the Father (Phil. 3:8-14). The verdict of the Law is the constant presupposition of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17); and the Gospel is the presupposition and motivation for the church's glad assent to the good will of God in the Law. (Rom. 7:12, 22, 25; 8:3, 4; Gal. 5:13, 14)

The church lives and works under God's culminating revelation in His Son Jesus Christ. This is most clearly and pointedly formulated in the first two verses of the Letter to the Hebrews: the God who in times past spoke in richly varied utterance by the prophets has now in the world's last days spoken by One who is His Son. In the Son God's grace and truth have found final expression (John 1:17). Jesus Himself spoke of His mission in the same terms: He describes Himself as the beloved Son whom the Lord of the vineyard sent last, after sending His servants, to the keepers of the vineyard to bid them give God what is God's (Mark 12:6). Jesus knows and declares Himself to be the Fulfiller of the Law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17);

His coming is the time of fulfillment, the day of the inbreaking of the reign of God. (Mark 1:15)

In the beloved Son God discloses Himself fully as the loving Father and calls men into communion with Himself. In the parable of the prodigal son Jesus tells men what His coming means; it means that God is welcoming home His wayward, lost, dead, penitent sons in full and free forgiveness (Luke 15:11-32). *The Son*, and only He, knows the Father and can reveal the Father and thus give men rest for their souls (Matt. 11:25-30). To those who received Him He gives power to become sons of God (John 1:12). At the close of His days on earth Jesus can sum up His life's work by saying that He has manifested God's name to men (John 17:6). That name is Father.

If much is given, more remains. The communion with the Father established by the Son shall be fully known and wholly enjoyed when the Son of Man returns and bids those blessed of His Father come to Him (Matt. 25:34), and those who have refused the Father's plea shall be forever shut out from His presence (Matt. 25:41). Then those who are the Lord's shall be forever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17) and see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Then God Himself, with the Lamb of God, shall be the mediated Temple-presence, the everlasting Light to those that are His servants and have His name inscribed on their brows. (Rev. 21:22; 22:3-5)

The New Testament therefore speaks of future revelation, too, of the future revelation of the Son of Man, of the

Lord Jesus Christ, of the coming glory of the Christ (Luke 17:30; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1). It speaks of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God on the coming day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). It speaks of a final deliverance that is to be revealed (1 Peter 1:5), of the revelation of a glory that shall enfold the sons of God (Rom. 8:18, 19), who shall then be transfigured fully into the likeness of the Son of God. (1 John 3:2; cf. Phil. 3:21)

This crowning revelation in Jesus Christ, which is both fulfillment and the promise of a greater fulfillment, does not cancel or annul God's previous revelation; rather, God's other and earlier revelation is confirmed by it. When God revealed Himself to men by His works, He willed that men should glorify Him and thank Him (Rom. 1:20, 21). This will of God is fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ, whose life and death was all one grateful doxology to the Father (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; 11:25; Phil. 2:11). He could say as He went into His death, "I have glorified Thee on the earth" (John 17:4). And this will of God is fulfilled in the new people of God, the new Israel that calls Jesus Lord; this people is created by the revelation of God in Christ to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), to glorify God by every word and deed. (1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 15:5, 6)

The Gospel, with its "law of faith" (Rom. 3:27), does not make void God's revelation of Himself in the Law; the Gospel makes the Law to stand, makes

it count as it never counted before (Rom. 3:31). No rabbi before Jesus and no moralist after Him ever took the Law so seriously as Jesus did; He makes every jot and tittle count. (Matt. 5:17, 18)

And Paul, the herald of the Gospel, proclaims the Law with an uncompromising rigor that Paul the rabbi never knew. He affirms with radical seriousness the verdict of the Law on man, the curse that the Law imposes on man, on all men without exception (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-13). He accepts the witness of the Law to the now-revealed righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21) and sees the institutions which the Law ordained as the shadow of things to come, whose substance is in Christ Jesus. (Col. 2:17)

And Paul asserts the good and holy will of God as revealed in the Law: God condemned sin in the flesh of His incarnate Son in order that the just demands of the Law might be fulfilled in redeemed, Spirit-led men who walk not according to the flesh (Rom. 8:3, 4). The Gospel of God speaks a solid yea to the Law of God; and the Gospel is God's yea to all His promises, the fulfillment of what God foretold through His prophets in sacred Scriptures. (2 Cor. 1:19, 20; Rom. 1:2)

The Gospel is the power of God *for salvation* (Rom. 1:16). "Salvation" according to the Bible is radical deliverance, rescue out of a desperate situation. The Gospel therefore presupposes a desperate situation for man; it presupposes the Law of God in full force, destroying sinful man. Jesus pictures man as a hopelessly indebted slave

whose life is forfeit and doomed; man hears the unexpected gracious acquittal of his King in this desperate situation (Matt. 18:23-35). And Paul proclaims his Gospel always under the overarching shadow of the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18), to men under the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13, 14), to men who must stand silent before the judgment seat of God, with no plea to offer for themselves, convicted by the Law which brings them knowledge of their sin but no release from sin. (Rom. 3:19, 20; 8:3, 4)

And so it is only by the delivering power of the Gospel that man comes to speak a glad assent to God's holy will revealed in the Law (Rom. 7:12, 22, 25). Only the man who has been liberated by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus ceases to rebel against the just demand of the Law (Rom. 8:2-4). Only the man whom God has set free by His call, only the man set free by Christ, can use his liberty in a slavery of love and thus fulfill the Law. (Gal. 5:1, 13, 14)

It is amazing to see how often this basic Law-Gospel fact of revelation is overlooked or slighted or blurred in current discussions of revelation. One finds revelation described simply as "God's gracious activity." Our Lutheran Confessions have given us eyes for this double aspect of revelation, Law and Gospel, wrath and grace; we can see how the whole New Testament (to say nothing of the Old), from John the Baptist to John the Seer on Patmos, proclaims the Gospel against the stark unchanging background of the Law and the wrath of God. And as we love

the Gospel, we must proclaim the Law; for unless the Law is heard in all its rigor, men have no ears for the Gospel. Where the Law is unaccented, the Gospel has lost its real accent too.

D. *The Content of Revelation*

God's revelation has a concrete historical content: God's significant revelatory action and God's effectual revelatory speaking in His dealings with His people for the salvation of mankind. God's action and God's speaking, in organic unity, constitute His revelation to man. Matt. 1:1-17; Acts 13:16-41; James 1:18 with 1 Peter 1:3.

Current Problem: One-sided emphasis on *deeds* of God as instruments of revelation. False antithesis between truth as personal encounter with the Revealer and informational truth. John 6:69; 8:24; 20:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 John 5:1, 5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

There can be no doubt of the fact that God reveals Himself by His deeds and that these deeds constitute an essential part of His revelation. Fifty-eight percent of the New Testament is narrative, the record of what Jesus taught and did, in person and through His apostles. Moreover, all the New Testament documents center in history, and all of them are historically occasioned and historically conditioned.

To take a concrete example: when Matthew sums up, or recapitulates, all that led up to the coming of the Christ, the whole previous revelation of God which prepared for this crowning revelation, he does so in the clipped, sparse, condensed, and baldly factual recital of the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:1 to 17). Similarly Paul in his sermon in

the synagog at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41) employs a very factual recital of the deeds of God to prepare for his proclamation of Jesus as the promised Christ.

But these deeds, as every reader of the Old Testament knew, were not dumb deeds; they were no silent shadow play but were accompanied and interpreted by the Word of God.

The readers of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew would recall how the word of the Lord came to Abraham, how the Lord spoke to David through the prophet Nathan, how the Lord spoke through David himself by His Spirit, how the captivity in Babylon had been foretold by the prophets and had been interpreted by them as God's judgment upon His apostate people, how the coming of the Messiah had been held up to the hope of Israel by the successive voices of prophecy. And Paul's hearers in the synagog knew that the history of Israel, from the patriarchs to Jesus, had been a history in which God's Word continually rang. (cf. Ex. 14:13, 31; 15:2, 18)

It should be remembered, moreover, that in Biblical usage the line between word and deed, particularly the divine word and the divine deed, is less sharp than in our usage. "Word" can be used, in fact, to designate a deed or thing (Lk. 1:37). The history, the recital of word and deed, can be summed up in a formulation. The very shape which the recital takes is already a formulation. Consider the examples previously alluded to, the genealogy in Matthew and Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch.

Matthew's recital is anything but a

mere chronicle. He arranges the genealogy symmetrically, in groupings of fourteen generations each, and thereby indicates that the history from Abraham to Jesus moves on measured paths of providence, that a divine purpose is working itself out toward a foreseen end. He is furthermore selective in his recounting of the ancestors of Jesus. And, startlingly enough, four women appear in the Messianic line. These are not the famous four to whom Judaic pride loved to point (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel); rather, Gentile women and sinful women — an incestuous woman, a harlot, and an adulteress appear at key points in this history. Matthew is indicating that Israel's failure as a nation cries for a Messiah who will save His people from their *sins* (Matt. 1:21), not merely from their enemies. *The Messiah comes as a shoot from the stump of Jesse, from the judged and ruined house of David.* (Is. 11:1)

Time will hardly permit a complete analysis of Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch, but even a cursory reading of the sermon will show that it is shaped by a threefold purpose: Paul wills to show first that this history is God in action, that God is dealing in might and mercy with His people. His recital is theocentric in character. Secondly, he emphasizes the fact that this history is a portrayal of God moving toward His goal. His recital is teleological. And thirdly, Paul is at pains to show that God is acting in this history for the salvation of His people. His recital is soteriological in character.

If the recital is, as we have seen, formulated history, the formulations

found in the Scripture are crystallized history. These formulations present history in its once-for-all meaning or significance for us now. They are not less than the actual record of the revelatory deed and word but more; the recorded word and deed are pointed up, contoured, and directed toward us by the formulation.

We do the same thing constantly in our daily lives. We crystallize a history in a formulation. Statements like "He is a good neighbor, a good father, a kind man, a patient man, a faithful husband" are *résumés* of history, crystallizations of history. They cannot be separated from history and should not be put in antithesis to history.

We find both in Scripture — revelatory recital and revelatory formulation. Genesis recounts the fall of man with its tragic upshot: "He drove out the man" (Gen. 3:1-24). Paul crystallizes that whole history in a single sentence, a formulation: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12; cf. 1 Cor. 15:22, 49). And so it is not surprising to find that New Testament writers can employ either the revelatory act itself or the formulation that conveys that act. Peter proclaims that God has begotten us again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). James asserts that God has brought us forth by the *Word of truth*. (James 1:18)

Current Problem: Present-day discussions of revelation emphasize the fact that "God reveals Himself in action,"

that He has "spoken through events." (John Baillie)*

There can be no quarrel with this emphasis as such. The festival half of our church year recalls and celebrates the mighty deeds of God; our preaching on both Old Testament and New Testament texts is rich in the recital of God's wondrous acts for us men and for our salvation. We have always brought up our children on both the Catechism and the Bible history. And our hymnody and the other sacred arts certainly proclaim the arm of the Lord laid bare.

But where is the Biblical warrant for an exclusive emphasis on the deed in antithesis to the word? Jesus in His dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead appeals, not to a recorded action of God (such as the translation of Enoch or Elijah) but to a recorded word of God: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and proceeds to reduce even that to a formulation: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. 22: 32). When Paul seeks the light of divine revelation on Abraham's status before God (Rom. 4:1-3), he appeals, not to a deed but to the verbal record (Gen.15:6) and finds in the words the mind and will of God.

If the deed is so exclusively significant, why is the Son of God, God's ultimate revelation, called the Word? Are we to retranslate the first verse of the fourth Gospel as Goethe's Faust did and make bold to say, "In the begin-

ning was the deed"? In the last analysis even the modern theologians who one-sidedly emphasize the revelatory deed find that they cannot get along without the revelatory Word and therefore bring in by the back door what they have thrown out the front. (Cf. Baillie, pages 64, 65)

Closely related to this one-sided emphasis on the deeds of God is the false antithesis between truth as personal encounter with the Revealer and informational or propositional truth. Granted that the essential content of all revelation is nothing less than God Himself offering Himself to man for personal communion; does this make truth about God or formulations concerning Him a matter of secondary importance? In fact, can the one exist without the other? Is truth as encounter possible without truth as plain propositional fact? Is it possible to believe *in* a Person without believing *that* He is so and so, that He has acted thus and thus and will act thus and thus in the future?

Young people in love believe in each other, or want to, and it is for this very reason that they spend hours telling each other about themselves, their families, their childhood. Certainly faith is faith *in* a person, but such a faith never exists in abstraction; it always exists in organic connection with the belief *that*, as a glance at our New Testament should suffice to show. Passages like John 6:69; 8:24; 20:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 John 5:1 and 5:5 show how powerful and necessary the facts of faith are for the life of faith. The Gospel which Paul proclaimed to

* References to "Baillie" are to: John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956.

the Corinthians (and Paul's conception of faith was certainly a personal one) created faith in the Corinthians by means of the propositions *that* Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, *that* He was buried, and *that* He was raised again from the dead according to the Scriptures.

As C. K. Barrett has pointed out in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, "Knowing and believing are not set over against one another but correlated. . . . Knowledge has also an objective, factual side. . . . Saving knowledge is rooted in knowledge of a historical person; it is, therefore, objective and at the same time a personal relation."

If we recall what was said above about formulations as crystallized history, we need not apologize for the much-maligned expression "revealed truth," and we need not concede that propositions are any less personal and powerful than the acts of God themselves. After all, is the "I believe *that*" of Luther's explanation of the Creed any less personal than the "I believe *in*" of the Creed itself?

II. SCRIPTURE

A. *Scripture as Recital, the Record of God's Revelation*

Scripture is recital, a record of the revelatory deeds and words of God. Scripture recounts the active and eloquent self-disclosure of God in creation, the fall, the flood, the lives of the patriarchs, the exodus, the wilderness years, the taking of the promised land, the history of the judges and kings of Israel, the captivity, the restoration, the witness of John the Baptist, the words and works

and death and resurrection of Jesus, the creation of the apostolate and the apostolic church, the apostolic witness to the Christ unto the ends of the earth.

Current Problem: The meaning and the theological significance of inerrancy.

That Scripture is recital, the record of God's revelation, hardly needs demonstration. All who read their Bibles know their Bible to be a record; and, of course, they know it to be much more than a mere record. But it is here, where we are dealing with it as record, that the question of inerrancy is relevant and becomes acute.

1. *Why Inerrancy Matters*

Revelation is both encounter with the Revealer and the receiving of information from the Revealer. Faith is both faith *in* and belief *that*, in organic unity; that is, faith in a Person is possible only on the basis of believing that the Person is a certain kind of person and has acted in a certain way. Therefore the record of God's revelatory deeds and words is essential to the birth of faith and to the life of faith.

Now the value of a record is entirely dependent on its truth, its veracity, its factuality, in a word, on its inerrancy. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is recital, is crystallized history. Its value as revelation depends entirely on the truth of the fact that God is what the Old Testament proclaims Him to be, the living God, the Lord of history and manifested in history; it depends on the truth of the fact that God did deal effectually, graciously, and faithfully with the patriarchs. If He

did not in fact thus deal with them, the record is worthless as a medium of revelation.

The New Testament is conscious of this. Jesus, for all His freedom over against the Old Testament Law, a freedom that seemed blasphemous to His scrupulous contemporaries, nowhere doubts or calls into question any event recorded in the Old Testament. He argues from the factuality of the Old Testament event, not about it. He argues from what God said about man and woman at creation, not about it. He argues from the fact that the men of Nineveh listened to the word of Jonah, not about it. Even when the Old Testament record is used by others to embarrass and contradict Him, as when the Jews point out that Moses commanded the bill of divorcement (Matt. 19:7, 8), Jesus does indeed correct their misquotation of the record ("Moses *permitted*"), but He does not question the accuracy of the record; He does not operate critically on the record. And the apostles follow their Lord in this as in all else. Neither Paul nor James argues about the record of Abraham and his faith; both argue from it.

As with the Old Testament record, so with the New Testament. Paul stakes his whole apostolate and the faith and the hope of the church on the bare fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did take place. Everything depends on these things being so; and Paul cites more than 500 witnesses in proof (1 Cor. 15:1-19). Peter protests vigorously against the idea that any humanly devised myth can serve as the

vehicle of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and emphasizes the eye-witness character of the apostolic proclamation (2 Peter 1:16-18). Inerrancy matters.

2. *The Nature of Biblical Inerrancy*

God is sovereign, free in His self-disclosure and in the instruments which He uses for His self-disclosure. We should beware lest we invade that freedom and attempt to determine a priori what God's inerrancy must be like. Let us not seek to impose our ideas of inerrancy on God. Let us rather permit God Himself in His word to tell us what kind of inerrancy He has chosen for the record of His deeds and word. We can only accept what God has given us in faith, in the believing conviction that His idea of inerrancy is better than ours.

We can assume therefore that the Old Testament writings in which Jesus heard His Father's voice and the apostles found the mind and will of God, do the work of God inerrantly, that they are arrows of God which will inerrantly find their mark. We cannot dictate to God how such arrows must be constructed. We cannot even assume that there is one universally valid kind of inerrancy, a best kind which God must inevitably employ.

In history, for example, an account may be inerrant in half a dozen ways, each completely valid in its way and for its purpose. Since we know God to be a God of prodigal variety, we may assume that He has at His disposal many modes of inerrancy. To illustrate: here are six accounts of one event:

1. A said to B in the presence of their common friends, "You are a fool and a coward."

2. A degraded and discredited B in the eyes of his contemporaries.

3. A revealed himself as a harsh and unfeeling judge of men.

4. By his harsh words A put an end forever to a friendship which he and B had cherished for twenty years.

5. A broke B's heart with his cruel words.

6. A by his harsh words to B shocked and estranged their common friends.

To argue that any one of these six forms, the first for example, is in itself more precise or accurate, more completely inerrant than the other five, is obviously nonsense. A police portrait, front and profile, does not necessarily tell us more about its subject than an artist's portrait of the same man. A mosaic is not necessarily less accurate than a line drawing, nor is an impressionistic painting less precise than a realistic one. An interpreted history can do its work more inerrantly than a merely factual chronicle. The Bible, the Word of God, is intended to move men; it is not surprising therefore that the inerrancy we find in it is a various one.

Inerrancy is a matter of faith, and for faith the inerrancy of God's word is a matter of course, an axiom. This determines what kind of questions we may ask concerning Scripture and what kind we may not ask. It has pleased Almighty God to give us four Gospels, four accounts of His climactic revelation of Himself in His Son. The question for us as believing readers and in-

terpreters of the Bible is not: Can we work up all that they record concerning Jesus of Nazareth into one consistent chronicle, with no gaps, no loose ends, and no overlapping? The one valid question is rather: Do the four Gospels in harmonious inerrancy set one Jesus the Christ before the eyes of the believing and worshiping church?

Faith will also dictate the kind of question we may ask concerning details in the Gospels. We have two accounts of the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew and in Luke (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Obviously they do not agree verbatim. If we use Matthew as the standard, we find that Luke, besides differing in verbal details, omits the "who art in heaven" in the address and the third and seventh petitions. Is there a problem in the fact that we do not have a word-for-word correspondence in the account of our Lord's teaching concerning the prayer of His disciples, certainly a matter of prime religious importance?

There is a problem only if we consider the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke chronicles of a rabbi Jesus of Nazareth or photographs of a great religious teacher. There is no problem for faith; faith takes the Gospels of Matthew and Luke for what they claim to be; faith understands them on their own terms, as proclamations of the Christ. Faith knows how to answer the question: Are we getting a prayer formula from a great teacher, a religious genius, or do we behold the Christ molding the will of His disciples with Messianic authority? Faith will ask: Are Matthew and Luke both

Christologically inerrant? And faith will confidently answer, Yes. If the Gospels distort the image of the Christ, they are errant in the one sense that counts. If they have muffled the voice of the Good Shepherd, they are errant in the one sense that concerns the church. This does not mean, of course, that inerrancy in historical or geographical matters is a matter of indifference. It is a matter of great importance; for the Christ came, as the Revealer of the Father's grace and truth, in the flesh, in time and space, "under Pontius Pilate." It does mean that these things matter as they relate to the Christ; inerrancy concerning the census of Augustus matters because God used that census to fulfill His promise concerning great David's greater Son. It matters Christologically.*

Both the careful harmonizers of the Gospels and the confident critics of the Gospels forget this cardinal point, that of Christological inerrancy. Why is it that a harmony of the four Gospels, to say nothing of a critical reconstruction of the four Gospels, is always somehow less powerful than the individual Gospels? Is it not because each Gospel is functionally, Christologically inerrant, is a power of God unto salvation on its own terms, in its own inerrant way? One marvels at the futility of these pious labors. It is as if the church had been given four luminous and speaking portraits of the Christ, and both the

poor deluded harmonizer and the poor deluded critic think to improve on God's handiwork by somehow blending them or superimposing them on one another.

3. *The Nondemonstrable Character of Biblical Inerrancy*

We shall never be able to prove the inerrancy of the Bible to any skeptic's satisfaction. Such proof is always attended by a twofold difficulty. The first difficulty is historical. We simply do not know all the facts in every case. The five arguments used by Strauss a century ago to prove that the account of our Savior's birth in Luke could not be taken seriously as history have all been pretty well exploded by the increase of historical knowledge. Increasing knowledge will solve other difficulties, too, but probably never all of them. And faith, overwhelmed by the power and the grace of the Christ, is not dependent on historical proof.

The other difficulty is theological. We can prove according to the testimony of the oldest, the most immediate, and the least prejudiced witnesses that Jesus did perform miracles; but we cannot prove that these miracles are "signs," that is, that they are the works of the Servant of the Lord who took our diseases and bore our infirmities (Matt. 8:17), that they are the revelation of the arm of the Lord (John 12:38). We can prove, that is, we can make it historically probable, that Jesus of Nazareth was executed under Pontius Pilate. We cannot prove historically that which only faith can affirm, namely, that the Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that

* It is hardly necessary to add that none of these statements is to be construed as a contradiction or a restrictive qualification of our Church's public statements on inerrancy.

He was delivered up for our transgressions and was raised again for our justification.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves whether we have not, by letting the question of inerrancy become our sole or prime concern, run the risk of losing sight of the power of Scripture. We are the generation upon whom the ends of the world have come — how much time have we for disproving the errancy of Scripture or for proving its inerrancy? Finally, whatever we may prove or disprove, all Christendom must repeat Peter's question: "To whom, Lord, shall we go?" It is the Bible or nothing. We hear God speak and speak inerrantly in the words of His prophets as recorded in Scripture, or we do not hear Him at all. We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the written words of His apostles, or we do not hear it at all. We have no alternative: we hear God's judgment upon us in the Law in this written form which He has willed, and we hear God's acquittal in the written Gospel which it has pleased God to give us, or we do not hear it at all.

B. *Scripture as Power, the Continuation of God's Revelation*

This record is not a set of stories that can be told or left untold at will. What this record contains is not subject to the progressive devaluation which attaches to all things past; these deeds and words are not remote and inert because they are past. For this record is a prophetically interpretive record; this record is inspired (1 Cor. 2:1-16). Inspiration means that mighty condescension of God whereby He in living, personal, and dynamic presence among

and in men spoke His word in the words of men whom He chose, shaped, and endowed. This act of God's makes men's words His very own, the potent and inescapable medium of His revelation. These inspired words do not merely inform concerning God's past action and past speaking. They convey God's word and action now (2 Tim. 3:14-17). The fact that God created man in His image determines my attitude toward my fellow man now (James 3:9). God's "Very good" at creation determines my relation to meat and drink now (1 Tim. 4:3-5). How God joined man to woman at creation determines my marriage now (Matt. 19:4-6). Adam's past fall is my present guilt (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19). Abraham's faith is significant for the men of Galatia (Gal. 3:6-10), for the men of Rome and Spain (Rom. 4), and for the man of today. Jesus' death is my death to sin, made mine by Baptism now (Rom. 6:3-10). His resurrection is *the* resurrection of the dead (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15). His victory is the present power of my victorious faith (Rev. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:57, 58; Rom. 6:8, 9; 8:37 with 33-36). Scripture is the record of God's revelation and is the continuation of it. Scripture is the Word of God.

Current Problem: The relationship between revelation and Scripture. Verbal inspiration.

Inerrancy is important and has rightly loomed large in our thinking and teaching on Scripture. Inerrancy is intimately related to the inspiration of Scripture; but inerrancy is not the decisive aspect of inspiration. That aspect is power; the inerrancy of Scripture is incidental to the power of inspired Scripture. Inerrancy by itself —

the demonstrable veracity of an account or record — still falls within the area of human means of persuasion; it can be an element in the “persuasive words of wisdom,” “the wisdom of men,” which Paul disclaims for his apostolic proclamation (1 Cor. 2:4, 5). Such persuasive wisdom can lead men to adopt certain views or to undertake certain actions. But only “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4) can victoriously invade men’s lives to create the saving faith that rests triumphantly on the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5) — or to doom men in their willful unbelief. (2 Cor. 2: 15, 16)

It is only natural, therefore, that Scripture does not speak often or expressly of its inerrancy (that is constantly presupposed) but does speak often and eloquently of inspiration and power.

The classic passage on the inspiration of the Old Testament is, of course, 2 Tim. 3:14-17. The context in which Paul’s words on inspiration are set is noteworthy. These words are preceded by an appeal to Timothy to remain faithful to Paul and his teaching in spite of suffering and discouragement, in times that shall grow steadily worse (2 Tim. 3:10-13). They are followed by Paul’s adjuration to Timothy to be mindful of his responsibility to the returning Lord when he proclaims the Word, to do the work of an evangelist faithfully, powerfully, patiently, and soberly, even though he must proclaim it to men who have no ears for it and must therefore suffer for that procla-

mation. Paul is pointing Timothy to a source of power for his ministry.

The first thing he says about the sacred writings, which Timothy has known from childhood, is that they have *power* — power to make him wise for salvation. Scripture has power because the Spirit of God is in it and works creatively by it. It creates nothing less than faith in Christ Jesus. “Every passage of Scripture,” Paul says, “stems from the Spirit of God.” Therefore Scripture can do for man what man’s reason cannot do: it can teach him, in the full Biblical sense of that word, that is, it can shape and mold man by telling him of God’s will and work. Scripture confronts man with God. Therefore its Word is a Word that convicts man of his sin and makes him bow before the righteous God.

This again is something that only the Spirit of God can do, for our own mind will always excuse our sin and seek to conceal it. But if this powerful Word brings us low, it does so in order to raise us up again; here, too, the power of the inspired Word is evident: it alone can make fallen man capable of standing before God. This mighty Word takes us in hand and puts our whole life in order under the reign of God’s righteousness. It creates a man of God, a man able to meet all demands, fitted out for every good work.

Paul links the Old Testament Word with Christ Jesus, as the whole New Testament does, and he sets it in parallel with his own apostolic Word. He is strongly implying that his Word, too, is a powerful and inspired Word.

What St. Paul here implies is clearly declared elsewhere in the New Testament. The Fourth Gospel records more fully than any other Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to His own. Jesus, according to John, stakes the whole future of His work and His church on the inspiration of His apostles. Future generations shall come to faith through their Word (John 17:20). Their witness to Him will be an inspired witness (John 15:26, 27). Through them the Holy Spirit will convict, that is, confront the world with the ultimate issues, the issues of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit through the Word of these men will confront men with the living reality of the incarnate Christ and thus bring them to repentance (John 16:7-11). And through their Word the Holy Spirit will bring men to faith; He will lead the disciples into all truth and bring home to them the full glory of the Christ whom they have seen and known (John 16:12-15). Their Word will therefore have in it the whole majesty and mercy of the Christ, their Word will have the power to do what only God Himself can do, the power to remit and retain sins. (John 20:20-23)

The apostles experienced the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Spirit as a reality in their lives. Paul claims that God has given him revelation through the Spirit and that he utters this revelation in words taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-13). There is no reason to restrict this inspiration to the spoken Word of the apostles or to deny it to

their written Word. Paul in 2 Thess. 2:2 parallels his written letters with his spoken Word and connects both with the working of the Spirit. Indeed, Paul's opponents deemed his letters to be more weighty and powerful than his speech, which they called contemptible. (2 Cor. 10:10)

Similarly, John parallels his written and his spoken Word without making any distinction between them (1 John 1:3, 4) and says of his written Word that through it men may have faith in Jesus Christ and thus have eternal life in His name (John 20:31). And the warning cry in the Book of Revelation, "He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," refers quite patently to the written Word of the seer.

The Relationship Between Revelation and Scripture

Current discussions of revelation and Scripture weaken the link between revelation and Scripture and confine inspiration to God's action in illumining the minds of prophets and apostles so as to enable them to interpret God's mighty acts correctly. Most modern theologians protest against "any simple identification of the Christian revelation with the contents of the Bible" (Baillie, p. 109) and speak of Scripture as the human, fallible witness to the revelation. Karl Barth's statement is typical:

Revelation has to do with Jesus Christ who was to come and who finally, when the time was fulfilled, did come — and so with the actual, literal Word spoken now really and directly by God Him-

self. Whereas in the Bible we have to do in all cases with human attempts to repeat and reproduce this Word of God in human thoughts and words with reference to particular human situations. . . . In the one case *Deus dixit* but in the other *Paulus dixit*; and these are two different things. (Quoted by Baillie, p. 35)

It is difficult to see how such an attitude can be squared with our Lord's own attitude and that of His apostles toward the Old Testament, which is uniformly one of absolute submission as to a divine authority. As for the New Testament, one may well ask: Do the apostles anywhere indicate any consciousness of being *fallible* witnesses to the revelation which they have received? Do they not rather claim the power of the Spirit for both the content and the word of their witness? Is Paul merely speaking figuratively when he speaks of Christ speaking in him (2 Cor. 13:3) or when he calls the Word that he gave to the Thessalonians the very Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)? If Paul's Word is merely a human and fallible word, how can he expect men to be responsible over against it? How can he say, "Your blood be upon your own heads," to men who have refused it? (Acts 18:6)

Verbal Inspiration

The idea of verbal inspiration today enjoys a somewhat higher degree of respectability than it once did. Even a man like Baillie admits that it is hard to conceive of an inspiration that does not extend to the words. He is willing to accept verbal inspiration. Although

he balks at plenary inspiration, since that would necessarily mean inerrancy. There never was, and there is not now, any reason for being apologetic about the formulation "verbal inspiration." And in the light of the present-day depreciatory attitude toward the written Word, the formulation underscores two important truths.

First, it makes unmistakably plain that there is no point at which one may say of Scripture, "Here the Word of God ends, and the word of man begins." It makes impossible any cleavage between the human and the divine. It underscores both the human and the divine character of the word; it takes seriously God's condescension in adopting our human speech, so that men moved by the Holy Spirit speak from God. (2 Peter 1:21)

Secondly, the formula "verbal inspiration" keeps the idea of inspiration personal. Communication by means of *verba* is *personal* communication. God deals personally with the men whom He inspires, and He sets them to work personally. They are equipped for communication, for ministry to their fellow men by verbal inspiration. If inspiration is not verbal, it fails at the very point where it is essential; for the prophets and apostles never received revelation for themselves alone but for ministry to the people of God and to mankind. It is difficult to see why this personal, ministerial verbal inspiration should be called mechanical or artificial — especially when we see how God in the process does not destroy human personality but honors it and uses it.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

A. *Interpretation as the Understanding of Recital*

God's revelation, recorded and continued in Scripture, does not lie in some vague region beyond the recital of His words and deeds. It is given in and with the recital itself. It must therefore be apprehended and appropriated as such in the linguistic and historical forms in which God has caused it to be recorded. The "humanity" of Scripture is not merely to be borne as a burden and a hindrance; it is to be welcomed as God's gift to us, as His free condescension to us in our frailty, as a help to us in apprehending His holy and gracious will for us. Just as in the case of profane documents, so in the case of Scripture: the interpreter must scrutinize the linguistic and historical facts as presented by the text; he must survey them in relation to one another and to the whole; he must immerse himself wholly and sympathetically in the documents and strive to become contemporary with the original revelatory situation. We must hear what the words and deeds recorded in the documents said in their time and place if we are to hear them as revelation for us here and now.

The Bible is not a lazy man's book, nor is it a dreamer's book. We should thank God for that; we should be grateful for the fact that the form of God's written revelation does not give scope to our fancies but shuts them out. Just because it is so human in form, it calls for sober, thinking, wide-awake work, not for speculations and day dreams. It comes to us in the languages and the forms of certain times and places. It

invites us by its nearness to our humanity and challenges us by its remoteness from our time. It remains always fresh and timely, not because it formulates timeless truths but because it tells an ageless story, a story that concerns all mankind so long as mankind shall live.

We must, then, as our traditional hermeneutics has always stressed, study the Bible linguistically and historically. Those of us who have only English or German as our linguistic equipment shall behold great things in God's Word if we use our English or German Bibles diligently and faithfully. Those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, however slight that knowledge may be, have been given five talents by our Lord and had better work with them, lest our returning Lord find cause to rebuke us for our infidelity. It is our business to hear our Lord as He has spoken, in the languages which He has chosen. We are to hear Him only, and we are to hear Him out; the interpretation of Scripture involves both the scrutiny of the individual part and the survey of the parts in their relation to one another and to the whole. *Sola Scriptura* means *tota Scriptura*.

It has pleased God to address us in certain languages; it has pleased Him also to speak to us at certain times and in certain places. Our study of His word must therefore be historical as well as linguistic. We have not, for instance, heard God speak to us in the story of the tribute money (Matt. 22: 15-22) unless we have taken seriously the historical setting of the question put to Jesus, unless we have realized

that there is a Messianic challenge in the question of the Pharisees and a Messianic revelation in the answer of Jesus. We have not fully heard "the clearest Gospel" of the Epistle to the Romans until we have realized that this Epistle is a missionary document, designed to further the progress of the Gospel in triumphant power to the Western world. We have not used this Word of God fully if it has not both deepened our doctrine and heightened our missionary zeal.

If we thus study our Bible, we shall not be tempted to obscure its native meaning by embroidering upon it with farfetched and alien fancies of our own. The meaning of the text itself will stand out in such bold relief as to be unmistakable; that meaning will be so richly suggestive as to make virtually impossible any play of our fancies. The one intended sense will emerge.

We are to study our Bible linguistically and historically as we would study a profane document such as the works of Homer or Shakespeare. But this does not mean that the Bible ever becomes for us, in any stage of our study, another profane document. Much of modern Biblical study from the eighteenth century onward is a terrifying example of what can happen when Biblical study becomes secularized.

The Historical-Critical Method

The almost universally practiced historical-critical method starts from the valid assumption that since the Christian faith rests on a particular event in history, "the Christian religion is not

merely open to historical investigation but demands it" (Hoskyns and Davey). Conservative proponents of the method claim for it that it is only a method and does not involve questions of faith or of dogma.

But what are we to say of utterances such as the following, chosen from among the more conservative practitioners of the method? Conzelmann in discussing eschatology says: "Jesus connects redemptive revelation with His own person insofar as He sees the Kingdom active in His own deeds and understands His preachment as God's last word before the End; but He does not make His person the express content of His teaching, e. g., by portraying His being, or nature, in Messianic titles. The application of such titles to Him (Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God) is probably the work of the church and therefore took place after His resurrection." Is this merely methodology? Does not this involve both a historical judgment on the validity of the Gospel record and a theological judgment on the Christ portrayed in our Gospels? And are not both judgments highly dubious ones?

Once it is granted, as faith must grant, that the life of Jesus is a wholly unique life, the life of the incarnate Son of God, how is one to judge historically what is probable in that life and what is not? What analogies can one employ when one has to do with a life without all analogies in the history of humankind? And where does one get the right, theologically, to the opinion that the Christ of the Gospels is in some part the creation of the

church? This is no longer historical investigation but a prejudging of the history that concerns the church, on the basis of analogies which do not fit that history.

A British scholar, Blackman, in his *Biblical Interpretation* pleads for a wider acceptance of the historical-critical method and deprecates the idea that there is anything basically negative or irreverent about it. We have learned, he says, that we can remove the Bible from the glass case in which the piety of earlier generations has enshrined it, examine it and deal with it critically, and be none the worse off for it religiously.

In another figure he compares the work of the critic with that of the surgeon, who does not mutilate the body he deals with but must remove dead tissue. We may cite his treatment of the miracles of Jesus as an example of such careful surgery (pp. 189–192). He does not reject all miracles — the greatest miracle of all, the incarnation, stands firmly established for Christian faith, he says — but he does reserve the right to sift critically the accounts of the miracles in our Gospels. Concerning three miracles — Christ stilling the storm, the coin found in the fish's mouth, the opening of the graves and the rending of the temple veil at the death of Christ — he maintains: Reason cannot accept them as having happened, and piety need not protest the verdict of reason. It was the first-century mentality of Jesus' credulous followers that produced these stories; still, though they are not true stories, they have religious value, for they show us

what an overpowering effect the person of Jesus had on His contemporaries.

Blackman has a further objection to the miracle of the coin found in the fish's mouth. It contradicts, he says, the consistent New Testament picture of Jesus' use of His miraculous powers; according to our Gospels Jesus always uses His power to serve others. In this case He uses it to serve Himself. But according to Matthew's account of the incident (Matt. 17:24-27) it is not even certain that we have to do with a miracle. Matthew does not say that Peter went, caught the fish, and found the coin in its mouth. In the case of every other miracle recorded in his Gospel Matthew does say that what Jesus commanded did take place — the sea became calm, the leper was cleansed, etc. The silence of Matthew in this case is therefore significant; we have to do, not with a miracle, but with one of Jesus' drastic expressions, which assures the disciple that his heavenly Father will provide him with the money to pay the temple tax. And "reason" need not object to a drastic expression.

But what of the other two miracles? Is there any just cause why reason should boggle at these two while accepting others? Blackman does not show just cause; he simply asserts that reason cannot accept them. If Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God in person (1 Cor. 1:24), there is no limit to His mighty works; reason has no criterion by which to distinguish between those miracles which are "possible" for Him and those which are not. A judgment like Blackman's is in the last analysis not a historical judgment

at all (at least not if we leave God in history and believe Him to be at work in history); it sounds more like a concession, and a rather arbitrary one, to modern prejudice.

After what has been said, we need only touch briefly on another example. Percy, not the most radical practitioner of the method, decides in his *Die Botschaft Jesu* (pp. 244, 245) that the ransom saying which Matthew and Mark attribute to Jesus (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45) cannot be a genuine saying of Jesus. He gives two reasons for his view: first, the saying views the mission of Jesus as a whole, from the vantage point of its completion, and is therefore rather the fruit of the church's reflection on Jesus than something which Jesus might have said in the midst of His mission; secondly, the transition from the idea of ministry to that of giving one's life as a ransom for many is a harsh one, a passing from one figure of speech to another without mediation.

One finds it difficult to take such reasoning seriously. The first argument begs the whole question of what Jesus was and knew Himself to be. Every account that we have of Jesus shows Him going His way to the cross and beyond the cross to the Father with set, conscious purpose: He knows what He must do and will do. If we are to accept Percy's judgment, we are forced to say that every evangelist has distorted the picture of Jesus and made of Him something that He in His life was not (which is, in fact, what much historical criticism says concerning the evangelists or of the "traditions" which

the evangelists used). The second argument of Percy forgets — or ignores — the fact that Jesus' word is recalling the Servant of the Lord portrayed by Isaiah: the prophecy of Isaiah pictures the Servant as crowning a life of ministry by going voluntarily into death for the deliverance of "the many." That prophecy found its fulfillment in Jesus, and this fulfillment makes the ransom saying completely natural on His lips.

Demythologization

In a way, Bultmann's demand that the New Testament must not merely be critically handled and selectively appropriated after the manner of the historical-critical method but must be radically reinterpreted and stripped of its "mythological" dress is the logical outcome of the historical-critical method. Bultmann in demythologizing the New Testament is doing thoroughly and consistently what that method did piecemeal and rather arbitrarily. He is making the full concession to modern man.

We need not, indeed, we cannot here go fully into a discussion of his views. Two points may suffice to indicate his trend. For modern man, Bultmann says, it is self-evident and axiomatic that the human personality is something closed and self-contained; it cannot be invaded from without by forces either demonic or divine. It is also self-evident for modern man that history runs its course according to immutable, unchanging laws. You cannot, therefore, Bultmann argues, reach modern man with a message, like that of the New Testament, which speaks of

the invasion of the personality by demonic or divine powers and of the intervention of supranatural powers in history. These "mythological" features must be stripped off from the message of the New Testament if that message is to reach and move modern man.

Bultmann believes that these features can be stripped away without loss to the essential message of the New Testament; they are, he says, the transient and outmoded dress of the message, not an essential part of the message itself. They are part of the world picture which the men of the New Testament shared with their contemporaries, which *must* indeed be sloughed off if we are to get at the heart of the New Testament.

But note what Bultmann has done. He has stripped away, not the first-century conception of man and of history but two conceptions that underly the whole message of the Bible, without which the message of the Bible simply ceases to have its peculiar meaning. According to the Bible, man is created in the image of God, for converse and communion with God. Man is designed to be "invaded" by God. If man refuses to give God room in his life, his life does not remain empty. It is invaded by the powers of Satan, whether man believes it or not, whether man consciously knows it or not. The life which will not be filled by God becomes the empty, swept, and garnished house which invites the hosts of Satan. (Matt. 12:43-45)

And history, for the Bible, far from running its course according to unalterable laws, is always in the hand of

God, under the governance of God. It is the scene of His revelation and the medium of His revelation. The God of the Bible is the God of history, the living God who acts and reacts, who in the incarnation goes deep into the history and the life of man. Bultmann has broken, not with the world picture of the Bible but with the God of the Bible as He deals with man.

B. Interpretation as Obedient Response to Revelation

1. Since the inspired recital is revelation, is the Word of God, is personal confrontation with the living God as a present actuality in my life, the interpretation of Scripture is a personal act. It is an act of repentance, faith, and obedience, performed by the interpreter as a baptized and worshiping member of the church. It involves the grace of complete self-subjection to the Word, the grace of a determination to hear the Word out on its own terms, the grace of a resolute refusal to apply to it *alien* norms. It means letting Scripture interpret itself.

2. Since revelation is God's action, personal and present in my life, the problem of applying Scripture in a given case is not merely or even primarily an intellectual one. The example of the man Jesus is instructive: His sovereign certainty in the application of Scripture at His temptation is due, not to the fact that He is *the* Son of God but to the fact that He is Son, simply, a Son for whom sonship spells obedience (Matt. 4:1-11). The native clarity of Scripture becomes clarity for man in a given situation, not merely by way of an intellectually painstaking interpretation of relevant texts and a careful analysis of the situation but rather

by way of a life of repentance which makes us submissive sons of God. Our interpretation, too, must be evangelical; it must be an expression of that free sonship which values its freedom as freedom from sin and as freedom for ministry to God and man in the unbroken inclusiveness of love. Paul's prayer is an intercession for interpreters: "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment." (Phil. 1:9)

We have anticipated much of what should be said here in the previous section, in our discussion of the historical-critical method and of demythologization. We need only point up the positive side of what was said there a bit more, and we have done. We have seen what happens when men no longer take off their shoes when they enter upon the holy ground of Scripture, when men are no longer filled with holy awe at the speech of God. And we all know that our church is not immune to this seductive mode of thought; we know that these bitter and secular waters are breaking on our shores.

What should our reaction be? Shall we become "anti" something — anticritical, anti-intellectual? Shall we seal ourselves off from all current problems and current developments? We should not, and we cannot. We cannot, for these waters will be breaking still upon our shores, whatever dikes we build. We should not, for we shall not be entering upon our heritage that way. The God of history has given our church this great gift, that for us total submission to the Scriptures is something self-evident, natural, axiomatic.

Such submission is not something that happens of itself; it is not automatic and cannot be automatically transferred from generation to generation. It must be ever and again revived and won anew in repentance and faith if it is to be had and transmitted.

That is why we have emphasized the *personal* character of interpretation as response to revelation. It is personal, not in the sense that it is individualistic, self-willed, arbitrary; Scripture itself warns us against such an attitude in interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). It is personal in the sense that it involves the whole person of the baptized man. The attitude of the interpreter is the attitude of the man who has gone into death in Christ and has emerged into the newness of a life lived wholly to God, the man who in proud humility wears the kindly yoke of the Son of God. The whole person of the baptized man includes his intellect, the intellect that God the Creator gave him, the brains that God the Redeemer has redeemed.

Interpretation as a personal act of the baptized, worshiping man of the church will not be anti-anything, not anti-intellectual (that way is the way of murky enthusiasm), not even anticritical. It will be "critical" in the true sense of that much-misused word, critical not in the sense of standing in judgment over Scripture but in the sense of being under Scripture in an intelligently active appropriation of Scripture on its own terms. Critical interpretation will mean simply that we reverently and submissively employ dis-

ciplined judgment in determining historical and theological relationships within Scripture, tracing the great contours of the Biblical picture and seeing details in their relationship to the dominant lines. (The Reformation's distinction between Law and Gospel is a supreme example of genuinely "critical" interpretation.) Then we shall have and keep a genuinely Biblical theology and shall be sovereignly free in appropriating all that is good and true in the work of all interpreters.

If our interpretation of Scripture is thus truly personal, we shall develop a sure touch in the application of Scripture. When Jesus overcame Satan (we, too, are always overcoming Satan when we apply Scripture to our needs in this world), He was doing what any Israelite might do, what any son of God can do. He was hearing His Father's voice in the Old Testament and obeying it.

If, after doing the necessary lin-

guistic and historical work, we still find Scripture hard to understand and to apply, there is one great, fearful question which we must ask ourselves. That question is: Do we *want* to understand it — or are we afraid to understand it, lest, having understood, we must obey it? The Son has set us free; interpretation is the exercise of that free sonship. It therefore grows on the soil of repentance and works by love.

What is the way to certitude? The way of the interpreter is always through *tentatio*; he never reaches the stage where he has left all problems behind him. But if he gives himself to Scripture and lets the Spirit take over, he shall again and again leave his problems and his questions below him. He will rise on wings of adoration and thanksgiving to those high regions where God's larks are singing and the whining of the gnats of doubt is heard no more.

Hearing and Telling the Word

By H. J. EGGOLD, JR.

When Paul wrote the Corinthians: "God has committed unto us the Word of reconciliation," he told them two things: that the Word they had received told them all facts of the reconciliation of the world by Christ Jesus; and that it was the Word which had the inherent power to effect the reconciliation of the sinner to God.

The Scriptures are indeed a collection of writings, inspired by God to be sure, which present all that God has chosen to reveal about Himself and His relationship with man. In the Scriptures we learn about what man is like, that he is a fallen creature, conceived and born in sin, separated from God, and utterly incapable of coming to God of himself. We learn also about God, not only that God is a jealous God, but also a God of infinite mercy who reconciled the world to Himself by Christ Jesus and offers to all peace and heaven itself.

But the Scriptures are more than a set of doctrinal propositions to be perceived intellectually. The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). When Jesus preached we are told that "the people were astonished at His doctrine, for His Word was with power" (Luke 4:32). The Bible itself is lavish in describing the power of the Word. The Word is called the quick and powerful Word (Heb. 4:12); it does not return void (Is. 55:11); it quickens (Ps. 119:5; 2 Cor. 3:5); it

sanctifies and cleanses the church (Eph. 5:25); through it men are led to know the truth (John 8:31); men are born again by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23); faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17); it converts and regenerates (2 Tim. 2:25; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19); it justifies (Rom. 3:27, 28); it brings peace (Is. 2:3-5); eternal life (John 8:68); it is able to save souls (James 1:21); it makes us partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4, 5); by it we are able to overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:14); it causes us to grow (1 Peter 2:2). It is an effective Word even though some stumble at it (1 Peter 2:8). This dynamic character of the Word led Luther to say: "To me it is not simply an old song or an event that happened 1,500 years ago; it is something more than an event that happened once—for it is a gift and a bestowing that endures forever." (*Erlanger Ausgabe*, XX, 1.114)

The Word has this shattering and vivifying power because it is the means by which the Holy Ghost enters the heart to convict men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and to guide them into all truth. Quite significantly Jesus joined the water of baptism with the work of the Spirit when He told Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For that which is

born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5, 6). The Word is called the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The Book of Acts is the church's commentary on the work of the Spirit through the Word. We are told that "... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31), and "the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved." (Acts 2:17)

All called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ are the *ekklesia*, the church. Paul brings out the essential unity of the one, holy, Christian, and apostolic church in his Letter to the Ephesians when he says: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit even as you are called in the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:3-6). The Scriptures use significant pictures to describe the unity of the church in the fellowship of Christians with Christ and with one another. They are called branches in Christ, the Vine; sheep of the one Shepherd; stones in the holy temple in the Lord; and members of the body of Christ.

But the Apology reminds us that when we speak of the church, we are not dreaming of a Platonic state, "but we say that the church exists, namely, the truly believing and righteous men scattered throughout the whole world" (Apology, VII, 233, 21). The church, therefore, is people, the faithful in

Christ Jesus. Where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered, there we find the church. Hence, also the local Christian congregation is referred to in Scripture as the church. As a final court of appeal in cases of church discipline, Jesus says: "Tell it unto the church" (Matt. 18:17). Paul addresses his First Letter to the Corinthians "to the church of God which is in Corinth . . ." (1 Cor. 1:2). In the local congregation there may be also hypocrites, yet for the sake of the Christians within it, the local congregation is called the church. Paul writes "to the faithful in Christ Jesus" at Ephesus (Eph. 1:1), to "those sanctified in Christ, called to be saints" in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), to the "saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae." (Col. 1:1)

THE CHURCH AND SYNOD

In response to the prayer of Jesus: "that they all may be one" (John 17:21) and to the word of Paul: "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), our forefathers founded the Missouri Synod. Although admittedly a human organization, the Synod serves the good purpose of giving individuals and congregations an opportunity to carry out collectively those responsibilities which can best be done through united effort. Among these responsibilities we think, for example, of the conservation and promotion of the true faith, of the training of pastors and teachers, of the publishing of Christian literature, of the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and of providing resource

materials and counsel to the individual congregations in the fields of stewardship, parish education, and missions, and of "the supervision of the ministers and teachers of Synod with regard to the performance of their official duties, and the protection of pastors, teachers, and congregations in the performance of their duties and the maintenance of their rights." (Constitution, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, Article III)

To carry out its function, the Synod regularly elects and appoints various officers and boards. Of particular interest to us is the office of the Circuit Counselor. According to Article XII of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, he shall assist the District President in exercising supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of the office of the pastors and teachers of his District and in becoming acquainted with the religious conditions of the congregations of the District (Article XII). To this end he shall officially visit the congregations, pastors, and teachers of his circuit (Bylaws 3.65). In an evangelical, brotherly manner he is to discuss with his brethren in the ministry their high calling, at the same time ascertaining whether they are faithful in the performance of their God-appointed tasks and are conducting themselves in a manner worthy of their vocation (Bylaws 3.73). In his visits with congregations, the counselor is to remind them of the glory and responsibility of the universal priesthood (Bylaws 3.75). To strengthen the spirit of unity, fellowship, and co-operation

among the several congregations of the circuit, the Counselor is to call a meeting of the circuit at least once a year. (Bylaws 3.91; 3.95)

The role of the Circuit Counselor is admittedly a difficult one. The office calls for a large measure of genuine love for the brethren, so that those with whom he deals feel that he is not endeavoring to lord it over God's heritage, but is genuinely concerned both for the individual and for the church. The Counselor needs to cultivate firmness, balanced with patience for the infirmities of the weak. Furthermore, he needs to be quite familiar with the program of Synod so that he can intelligently discuss it with pastors, teachers, and congregations, and, if need be, convince the gainsayers. But, most of all, he needs to be a humble follower of his Lord, so that both by his example and word he will always in effect be saying: "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1)

At this point, it is in order to discuss the relationship between the individual member and Synod. The Synod can, as in fact it has, establish conditions of membership and admit only those pastors, teachers, and congregations into membership who subscribe to these conditions (Constitution, Articles II, VI). At the same time, it can dismiss from its organization those who violate the conditions of membership. (Article XIII)

However, "in its relation to its members Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the

individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the conditions of a congregation are concerned." (Constitution, Article VII). The Synod cannot usurp prerogatives which Christ has given to the congregations. When, for example, the Synod calls a pastor or teacher, it can do so only at the direction and in the name of the member congregations.

Although the Synod functions in an advisory capacity, the individual pastor, teacher, or congregation joining Synod promises "in accordance with his vocation, his ability, and the means at his command diligently and earnestly to promote the purposes of the synodical organization" (Bylaws 1.05). When a pastor or teacher becomes a member of Synod, he agrees to the supervision by Synod of his doctrine, practice, administration, and performance of his official duties (Article III, 7). Therefore, "Synod expects every member congregation to respect its resolutions and to consider them of binding force if they are in accordance with the Word of God and if they appear expedient as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned. Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of the congregation to be the judge of the expediency of the resolution as applied to its local condition. However, in exercising such judgment the congregation must not act arbitrarily, but in accordance with

the principles of Christian love and charity." (Bylaws 1.09b)

For all the blessings we receive through our association together in Synod and for the contributions we are able to make to the world through Synod, we ought both to pray the Lord of the church to preserve us in the unity of the Spirit and ought to dedicate ourselves anew to that purpose. In addition to our faith, the bond that must unite our Synod is fervent love. Love tells synodical officials and boards not to confuse leadership with lordship, and it tells pastors and congregations not to confuse liberty with license.

HEARING THE WORD

We turn our attention now to the task of the church in the world. Werner Elert suggests the thought that the church lives under the rhythm of hearing and telling of the Word. Paul before him declared: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10)

To hear the Word of God implies, first of all, that the Word of God, the sacred Scriptures, remains the source of doctrine, the final arbiter in all matters of faith and life. Jesus Himself appealed to the absolute authority of the word of Scripture. He chided the Emmaus disciples: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . . and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scripture the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27). He condemns the unbelief of the Pharisees with the words: "Did

ye never read the Scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Matt. 21:42). With equal vigor he denounces the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?" (Matt. 22:29-31). Again Jesus challenged the Jews: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

St. Paul followed the footsteps of Jesus. In Acts 17:2 we are told that when Paul came to Thessalonica, he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." Furthermore, in Eph. 2:20, he declares that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Similarly also our Confessions regard the Scriptures as the source and norm of doctrine. Dr. Mayer declares: "The Lutheran Confessions are instinct with the awe of Holy Scripture" (F. E. Mayer, *Popular Symbolics* [St. Louis, 1934], p. 27). The Formula of Concord declares: "We receive and embrace with our whole heart the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged." (Formula of Concord, Th. D., Compr. Sum., 3, 9)

Luther, too, over and over again enunciates the *sola Scriptura* principle. In one place he says: "Holy Scripture is the book given by God the Holy Ghost to His church. From this book

the church learns what the church is, what the church must do, what the church must suffer, where the church must abide; where this book ceases, there the church ceases. For He (Jesus) says: His church will not listen to the voice of strangers." (*Erlanger Ausgabe*, XXVI, 100, 101)

The Reformers insisted on the *sola Scriptura* principle particularly against the Romanists, who like the Pharisees elevated tradition over Scripture; against the enthusiasts, who claimed to receive revelation of the Spirit apart from the Word; and against the Reformed, who elevated reason above the Word.

Particularly against the latter they insisted that Scripture is its own interpreter. Although they admitted the ministerial use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture, they scorned its magisterial use. We recall with a smile how Luther referred to reason as Frau Hulda, who always wanted to intrude herself into the business of theology. The Formula of Concord declares: "We are certainly in duty bound to receive the words as they read and allow ourselves to be diverted therefrom by no objection or human contradiction spun from human reason." (Formula of Concord, Th. D., VII, 45)

Luther's own respect for the words of Scripture is well known. He declares: "I am bound; I cannot escape it. The text stands there too mightily." (St. Louis Edition III, 2060)

Since in our day some theologians see fit to deny the historical character of the Biblical accounts, it is important to emphasize that it is not "within the

right of anyone to empty the text of Scripture of its obvious meaning on the grounds that the thought patterns of Scripture are couched in ancient and no longer intelligible mythological terms, and to fill these emptied words with other meanings suggested by the mind of the interpreter." (Paul M. Bretscher, *Take Heed Unto the Doctrine* [Mimeographed Synodical Essay, 1959], p. 23)

If we hear the Word, then theological treatises, including the confessions of the church, ancient and modern, are to be placed under Scripture as statements about Scripture. On this point the Formula of Concord declares: "Other writings, however, of ancient and modern teachers, whatever name they bear, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together subjected to them and should not be received otherwise or further than as witnesses, which are to show in what manner after the time of the apostles, and at what places, this pure doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved" (*Triglott*, p. 777). Although the truths of Scripture remain unchanged, a clearer understanding of the Scripture may cause the church to revise a doctrinal statement it has previously made. The fact that the church in 400 years has not found occasion to alter its symbols is a tribute to the Scriptural insight and to the exact expression of the authors of our symbols of the sixteenth century.

To hear the Word implies also that we cling to the words of Scripture in the face of false and pernicious doctrine. The sheep hear the voice of their

shepherd; they are deaf to the voice of any other. Paul exhorts Timothy: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me . . . but shun profane and vain babblings . . ." (2 Tim. 2:13, 16). And our Lord Jesus exhorts us: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31)

When we say that the church hears the Word, we imply also that the church diligently studies the Word, for its own growth and for its preparation for witnessing. Jesus reminds us of the importance of hearing the Word when He says: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28). And St. Peter exhorts: "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). The disciples were witnesses to the things which they had seen and heard. They spent three years listening and observing. Then they went out captivated by what they learned and turned the world upside down with their message. St. John describes the apostolic ministry thus: "Of what existed from the very beginning, of what we heard with our ears, of what we saw with our eyes, of what we witnessed and touched with our hands . . . we bring you word, so that you may share our fellowship; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:1-3 Moffatt)

The spirit of the apostles must be that of the Christian witness today. He is to witness to the things that he has seen and heard. Scherer says: "I won-

der at times if anything more is needed to catch the wistful stare of men and women in our generation, anything but this sure sound, as if one had been off on a journey and returned with news." (Paul Scherer, *For We Have This Treasure* [New York, 1944], p. 30). The witness and his message become identified. The witness, therefore, is no neutral party. He cannot maintain the cold objectivity of the newscaster. He is an unabashed partisan to the Gospel. The witness, therefore, must not just know about Christ. He must know Christ. Emil Ludwig once said that if an author hopes to make his subject live, he must "live with him, think with him, eat with him." He went on to add, "Unless you have a certain mad, furious, and passionate relationship to your subject, you can never make him live in lives of others." (Ilion Jones, *Principles and Practice of Preaching* [New York, 1956], p. 22)

All this emphasizes the need for continuous hearing of the Word by the witness of Christ. We must all be willing to count all things loss that we may know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

In making a congregation a genuinely witnessing community, nothing is more urgent than a program of Christian education. The concept of the church which we have in the New Testament is that of a mutual edification society, each Christian building up the other in faith and love. The study of the Word supplied the early church with its message and motive power. The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"

(Acts 17:11). The Epistles of Paul were read in the churches. Paul exhorts the Colossians: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16)

P. T. Forsyth says that it is the church's task to appropriate its own Gospel (*Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*), in order to come to know better the height and depth and breadth of the love of Christ Jesus our Lord. This implies the sound program of Christian education for all the age levels. The corollary of a witnessing community is a Bible studying community.

One of the serious dangers we face in our age of activism is the neglect of the cultivation of the contemplative life in our churches. We can get so wrapped up in programs and progress that we neglect the one source of inner growth, the Word of God. We can be thankful that in the recent decades there has been a revival in our church of Bible study and discussion, particularly on the adult level.

If the laity needs to grow in the knowledge of Christ, so does the pastor. Every preacher will agree that in our age of activism there is too little time for meditation and reflection on Christ and His Word. We can easily become, to use Martin Marty's expression, "merely co-ordinators of co-ordinators and expeditors of expeditors." We professional workers need to take time and make time for the strengthening of our faith through daily Bible study. The

strength of our pulpit is in our study. Great preachers have been men who knew their Bible. They were able to bring forth from its treasures things new and old. Therefore, brethren, give attendance to reading.

A corollary of hearing must be telling. When the church knew but did not tell, it fell victim to dead orthodoxy and ultimately to decay. Pharisaism, monasticism, pietism, heard but had no Gospel for the world. Christ and culture did not meet.

It was not so in the early church. If ever the church had a sense of mission, it did in this early age. Ringing in the ears of the early Christians were the commands of Christ: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations"; "ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the world" (Acts 1:8). "And they spoke the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:3). They filled all Jerusalem with their message. When persecution came, their answer was: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). "And they went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4). Halford Luccock describes them as people who didn't know any better. They didn't know that it cost money to carry on worldwide missions; they didn't know that they might be put to death — all they did know was Christ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. And they told their story. They were fools for Christ. And the church grew.

All of us are agreed that there is

a great need today for the church to catch the spirit of this apostolic fervor. In a world threatened to be overrun by godless Communism, capable for the first time of destroying itself with weapons of its own devising, despairing because the gods of humanism, scientism, secularism, and a social gospel have failed — this is the world that challenges us to lead men out of the darkness of sin and ignorance to the light of Christ. The one sure way of meeting the challenge is more and more to inspire Christians with their privileges and responsibilities as the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, to be witnesses for Christ. This is the day to encourage Christians in their calling as parents or children, businessmen or laborers, as members of policy-making groups in the community, state, and nation, to witness by love and word to both the judgment and the mercy of God.

That our church has made remarkable progress in telling the story of the Cross is evidenced by the following facts: In 1945, our people seemed to catch the vision of the possibilities of personal evangelism through the each-one-reach-one program. This program has today become organized and implemented in our PTR programs. As a result of both these efforts there has been a remarkable upswing in the number of adult accessions to the church. In addition many congregations have a mission committee as one of the official boards of the congregation. Another significant fact is that since World War II the Lord has opened up at least nine new foreign

fields to our church. Significant, too, is the opportunity our church has had to witness through the mass media, the printed Word, *The Lutheran Hour*, and the "This Is the Life" television series.

For all of these evident blessings of God we have reason to praise the Lord. At the same time we need to remind ourselves that it is our ceaseless task as pastors to equip the saints for their work as witnesses.

This leads us to a discussion of the role of the pastor as witness. God makes pastors. Paul gloried in his office because he was an apostle "not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). Pastors today, too, have the assurance that they are called of God, for the Holy Spirit makes us overseers (Acts 20:28). Christ, the Head of the church, still gives the church pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry. (Eph. 4:11)

In a pre-eminent sense, then, pastors are ambassadors for Christ. They are His representatives who perform the functions of the office of the ministry in His name. He, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, tells His undershepherds: "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep" (John 21:15, 16). He who came not to be ministered unto but to minister declares: "He that will be great among you, let him be your minister, and he that will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26, 27). He who was Himself a faithful witness charges His pastors: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." (Acts 1:8)

To be sure, the pastor is also a servant of the congregation. Speaking also

for the other apostles, Paul told the Corinthians: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, our Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:3). The Christian pastor therefore has a dual responsibility: first of all, to Christ, to whom one day he will have to give an account (Heb. 13:17); and to the congregation which has called him for the public exercise of the Office of the Keys in their midst.

The Christian pastor is to witness for Christ, first of all, by his life. In no other profession is the godly life of the individual of more consequence than in the ministry. It is significant that in listing the qualifications for pastors St. Paul says: "A bishop must *be . . .*" (1 Tim. 3:2). To encourage Timothy, who seemed to be self-conscious because of his youth, Paul wrote: "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). St. Peter exhorts the elders: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). In his *Words to the Winners of Souls*, page 28, William Reed says: "Oh, how much depends on the holiness of life, the consistency of our character, the heavenliness of our walk and conversation! Our position is such that we cannot be neutral. Our life cannot be one of harmless obscurity. We must either repel or attract — save or ruin souls! How loud, then, the call, how strong the motive for the spirituality of soul and circumspection of life." To every pastor, therefore, St. Paul

says: "Take heed unto thyself . . ." (Acts 20:28)

But the pastor is to take heed also to the flock. His task according to Ephesians 4 is "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ." He is to bring the flock of God to spiritual maturity, to build them up both in their grasp upon the love of God in Christ Jesus and in their love toward their fellow man. This is another way of saying that he is to equip them for their task of witnessing. In addition, like Paul, every pastor is a debtor to all men, so that his task involves also the winning of the lost.

The means at his disposal is the dynamic of the Word. Through it he seeks to confront men with God. He preaches the Law to place men under the judgment of God so that they will come to see themselves for what they are — poor, miserable sinners. But through the Gospel of Christ he unveils to them the mercy of God which brings men to faith, strengthens them in it, and equips them to witness.

In view of the population explosion it is significant to mention the role of the pastor as recruiting agent for professional church workers. Between 1900 and 1950 the world population has increased from 1.3 billion to 2.7 billion. "The United Nations estimates that world population is growing by 5,600 every hour or 49 million a year" (*The Population Bomb* [New York, 1960], p. 4). On the basis of the projected growth of Synod, the Synodical Survey Commission estimates that by 1982 we will have a communicant mem-

bership of 4,311,000. By that same date we will need 13,687 active pastors, and 18,150 parochial school teachers, and 1,440 instructors at our colleges and seminaries. (*Reports and Memorials*, 44th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, pages 120, 121)

All of this points to the demand for a vigorous program of recruitment of professional workers. We shall have to alert our members to the fact that it is the church's responsibility to perpetuate its own ministry and shall have to recruit gifted men and women for our church vocations.

The church confesses its faith also through the writing of confessional statements. It is in the very nature of a confessional church to confess its faith not only by setting forth what it believes but also by condemning that which opposes its belief. Its very reverence for the Word prompts it to witness to its truth and to oppose that which violates the truth of the Word.

It is this purpose which has prompted the writing of confessional statements throughout the history of the church. It is significant to note that humanly speaking we would not have a number of New Testament epistles except for the threat of false doctrine. The Epistle to the Galatians proclaims the glorious liberty of the Christian man in Christ and, at the same time, curses those who would preach another Gospel. We would not have the majestic Christological section of Colossians except for the gnostic heresy that threatened the church. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians was written to settle erro-

neous views which had arisen in the church regarding the Lord's Supper, church discipline, the office of the ministry, and other points of doctrine. Arianism prompted the writing of the Nicene Creed. And both Arianism and Nestorianism led the church to formulate the Athanasian Creed. In the sixteenth century the Lutherans declared their faith in the unaltered Augsburg Confession. Their purpose was irenic, for it was their hope that "these matters may be settled and brought back to one perfect truth and Christian concord, that for the future one pure and true religion may be embraced and maintained by us, that as we all serve and do battle under one Christ, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian church." (*Triglot*, p. 39)

The Formula of Concord arose to settle doctrinal problems within the Lutheran Church itself. The framers of this symbol stated as the purpose of the confession: "that we should have a unanimously accepted, definite, common form of doctrine, which all our evangelical churches together and in common confess, from and according to which, because it has been derived from God's Word, all other writings should be judged and adjusted as to how far they are to be approved and accepted." (Formula of Concord, Th. D., *Triglot*, p. 855, 10). Again, they declared: "Necessity, therefore, requires us to explain these controverted articles according to God's Word and approved writings, so that everyone who has Christian understanding can notice which opinion

concerning the matter in controversy accords with God's Word and the Christian Augsburg Confession and which does not. And sincere Christians who have the truth at heart may guard and protect themselves against the errors and corruptions that have arisen." (*Triglot*, p. 849, 10)

The confessors of the sixteenth century regarded their confessional writings, together with the three ecumenical creeds, as normative for Lutheran pastors and professors not because they were composed by their theologians, but because they were taken from God's Word and founded firmly and well therein (*Triglot*, p. 851, 3). In the preface to the Book of Concord the princes and estates declare: "We also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves or from the phrases which are found in them . . . and we intend to examine all controversies according to this true norm and declaration of the pure doctrine" (*Triglot*, p. 8). With an equal sense of dedication the signers of the Formula pledged not to teach contrary to their confessions in these words: "Since now, in the sight of God and of all Christendom, we wish to testify to those now living and those who shall come after us that this declaration herewith presented concerning all the controverted articles aforementioned and explained, and no other, is our faith, doctrine, and confession, in which we are also willing, by God's grace, to appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, and give an account of it; and that we will neither

privately nor publicly speak or write anything contrary to it, but, by the help of God's grace, intend to abide thereby. Therefore, after mature deliberation, we have, in God's fear and with the invocation of His name attached our signatures with our own hands." (*Triglot*, p. 1103, 40)

Before the Formula was adopted, pastors, professors, and teachers were urged to study it and to express doubts and scruples. It is interesting to note that some argued that it was sufficient to be bound to the unaltered Augsburg Confession and that it was tyrannous of the church to insist upon subscription also to the Formula of Concord. However, 8,000 theologians, pastors, and teachers cheerfully signed the Formula. If a person did not accept it, he was suspended from office. Several professors of Leipzig and Wittenberg who declined to acknowledge the Formula were dismissed. Bente says: "Whatever, by adopting the Formula of Concord, the Lutheran Church therefore may have lost in extension, it won in intention; what it lost in numbers, it won in unity, solidity, and firmness in the truth." (*Triglot*, p. 253)

From this historical survey we are able to draw some conclusions to guide the confessing church of today:

1. That in every generation the church has both the right and the duty to adopt confessional statements by which it declares its faith in opposition to current errors not treated explicitly in the historic symbols. A case in point is the doctrine of the Word. Although implicitly the Book of Concord teaches that the Scriptures are the

verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God, yet it does not treat the doctrine explicitly. The church of the twentieth century, therefore, has both the duty and the privilege to adopt a confessional statement on this doctrine as the assertions of neo-orthodox theologians make this necessary. The alternative to such an on-going confessionalism is latitudinarianism in those doctrines not explicitly set forth in the Book of Concord, 1580.

Dr. Walther, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 137, says: "It is true that since, at all times men arise in her midst who 'speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them,' Acts 20:30, she is compelled to formulate the pure doctrine ever more precisely in order to unmask the deceiving spirits and keep them from smuggling, by means of deceptive phrases, false doctrines into the church."

2. That confessional statements, ancient and modern, serve the good purpose of setting forth in unequivocal terms the teaching of the church, and, to use Melanchthon's expression, of preserving harmony in the church and of bridling the audacity of those who invent new doctrines. (*Triglot*, p. 9)

3. That, when adopted by the congregations of Synod, such confessional statements, ancient and modern, have a normative character for Lutheran theology, and professors, pastors, and teachers of the Lutheran Church can be held to preach and teach in accordance with them.

4. Since the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and the source and

norm of doctrine, and since the Confessions are a true expression of the Word of God, modern confessions are to be regarded as being under the authority of the Word and the historic confessions.

The Church lives under the rhythm of hearing and telling the Word. May God the Holy Spirit give us the grace diligently to study the Word, that, empowered by it, we may preach the Word with boldness.

The Gospel to Be Preached

By RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

The resource material for this address is literally Colossians. If anything in this lecture will not be derivable from Colossians One, with a few references to Two or Three, forget it. But everything that obviously is drawn from Colossians, for God's sake — and I mean that literally — find it and remember it. Not just during this hour but also in the next two this should really be a Bible class.

You will find that the material should be readily available from the King James Version or the RSV or, preferably, the Greek New Testament; and it should work practically verse by verse. The outline in the Convention Manual tries simply to utilize the materials of Colossians in the sequence in which they come. We shall consciously and intentionally make the Epistle to the Colossians itself the material that is before us.

I say this because we have some rather sweeping, at first sight oversimplified things to think about this morning, things which a preacher ought not dare to say on his own authority. Here we are really resting four-square on the authority of the Bible and principally of Colossians — but I hope that we're not just resting. I hope that the way the Bible itself talks about its authority, you will sense a pressure, a thrust from the pages of the Bible that will move with you into your ministry.

The One Power for the Church's Work Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Our father and brother, Dr. E. J. Friedrich, has just stressed this pressure and power on the basis of Romans 1:16, *dynamis Theou*. We are all interested in power. This is supposed to be a power convention, thinking about power that the church has to raise and expend. It's easy to see dollar signs impressed over the "p" in that word "power" for the next year. But that isn't the power. For the church the power is never anything less than God Himself. The power isn't in the money. The power isn't even in the preacher. The power is always in God.

This morning we want to talk for a few minutes of what is necessary in order to exert this power, to turn it loose at the drawbar, to deploy it and then employ it. We want to think of the logistics that are necessary in order to swing this power of God, of the literal personal God Himself, into the domain and work and projects and challenges before the church and every individual member of the church to whom you and your co-workers in our Synod minister.

The power is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we say. That is just another way of saying that the power is God, for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a word and message, the preaching and the means by which God Himself acts so that people have power.

A horrible distortion of this truth has pervaded theology chiefly since the days of C. H. Dodd in England. That is that the Gospel is indeed a power in order to convert people, and therefore that the Gospel comes primarily as a message to the unconverted. It is the great powerful tool of the mission enterprise. But after you have people corralled in the church, then another power takes over. And that's the power — they use the word from the New Testament — of the *didache*, of teaching. Now men, preachers and fellow Christians, tell each other what to do, and this replaces the original power of the Gospel.

This is not just an oversimplification. This is a very tragic distortion, for God has one and the same power by which He brings people to life and captures and rescues them from death to give them faith and make them blameless under His judgment, and one and the same power also to produce the fruits of that faith, to give them hope, to work in them this manifold gift of love, to keep them constant out to the day of their translation from this present world into the age of ages beyond the skies. This is the direct assertion of Colossians in its first eight verses.

St. Paul says that this one Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation." Almost always St. Paul means that word "salvation" of the final thing at Judgment Day. Hence when he says that it's the power that reaches down right to that moment, he means that it's not merely a power that brings you to faith and which you as God's

minister preach in order to bring people to faith, but he means that the identical power, the power of the Gospel as it is being preached to people, is God's way of sustaining that faith, of producing those fruits of love, and of helping men cling in Christian hope right down to the day of the redemption of the body, down to the hour of the Last Assize and the Great Judgment.

Hence this is the thing that we have to wake each other up to if we're going to exert the power of God on the work of the church. We have to make sure that we're actually using God's own power; that we're not substituting for it some theological distortion or half-truth, that we're not just getting weary because it's so old, that we have no need of dreaming up some new gimmick as we preach or as we minister to our people. We have to remind ourselves not to wheel into the battle line of the church some activistic, some artificial, some fleshly device by which the little people are stampeded into action for God and enter upon it because they like the preacher or because they don't like him and they want to shut him up in the simplest possible way by going along with what he wants them to do. Oh, God has the same power — the same power for bringing us to faith and for pulling us into producing the fruits of faith.

Now watch from beginning to end of the first chapter of Colossians how through it all this great thing, "be not removed from the Gospel," becomes the condition, the exercise, the motive power of the church for keeping its

people faithful to the Great Day and for making them fruitful unto every good work.

But Note What Gospel This Is

Having said all that, we have barely scratched the surface, for we need to remind one another what this Gospel is. It is not just a label — g o s p e l — a word repeated frequently, the way an undergraduate homiletics student likes to solve the problem, hoping that the instructor won't notice that he never once preached it. The vocable "Gospel" is not the power, but the Word of the Gospel, the preaching of the Gospel, is the power. Just to recommend believing in the Gospel, to speak about the abstraction "Gospel" with great fervor and pressure, is not preaching the Gospel.

But we preach the Gospel when by every possible means, by speech, by ministry, by the sacrament as the people preach the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26), we cause the people to think in their minds and to see and grasp in their hearts this fact, that God has pulled them out, rescued them from death, from the dominion of Satan, from the languor of being without God, from the travail of the flesh, and has put them and keeps on putting them under the new power, into the kingdom of His dear Son. This you do as by your preaching you cause those people in their minds to say: "God gave Jesus Christ, His own Son, to do battle with the forces against me, and He was victorious; for when He cried out on the Cross, 'It is finished,' it was."

That was a mighty victory, that death of Christ on the cross, and God led Him in a triumphal celebration — *thriambeuein* is the great word in Colossians — so that the forces of hell and all the nations and generations on the surface of the earth might see it. God had Him celebrate this triumph by raising Him from the dead.

So the preacher steps before his people, and the faster the people forget the preacher the better, as he causes them to concentrate on this mighty drama of God's action: The heavenly Father sees mankind, His creature, beaten, snatched up under another rule, dissipated, wasting its birthright and its energies, and He sends His Son to recapture these people, to draw them back again into God's orbit, into the kingdom of God; and He does that as He makes the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, defeat the powers of death and hell, unloose the clutch which the devil and his angels have on the hearts and the lives of men and of generations yet unborn. God releases them as the great carpenter's hand of the Son comes back down into that world and starts building the body of Christ, which is the church.

The Lord Jesus Christ does it, not merely because He is *Creator*, not merely because He made all — He did, said Colossians One — but because He is *Redemptor*, because He is the Redeemer who died for mankind. In the bitter giving up of His life with His own heart's blood He has covered the sins of mankind so that God has forgiveness — forgiveness for the whole world. The forgiveness is already there.

Colossians actually talks about the work of the atonement in a number of different ways. Look for them as you read through Colossians One.

The first one is this act of saving and rescue which we have depicted. There are two great dominions pitted against each other. The principalities and powers of the Evil One, the forces of world and flesh, are gathered together in one great enclave. And on the other side is the force and the kingdom of God. This is Luther's mighty emphasis in theology, the theology of God and the theology of man, and it is documented so strikingly in these chapters, that man lives in two kingdoms, under the empire of Satan and under the empire of God. But God proposes to rule alone, and God has won the victory through His Son Jesus Christ, who gave Himself into death, who nailed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us to His cross and carried it to the grave that we might be free.

And here comes the mighty word that has to be at the heart of all church work. We are free! We are free from the devil! We are in the process of being freed from this plague. We can be free to become every man's servant and do God's will for loving men abundantly and to the uttermost, even as our Lord Jesus Christ came to set men free that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

Another way that the Epistle to the Colossians describes the work of the atonement is the forgiveness of sins. Notice the connection of thought in these tremendous sentences of the

Epistle. Don't let the grammar throw you; it is terribly useful. It's there to show you what is supreme and what all follows in its train. Plow into it and confront this fact: God gave Jesus Christ so that our sins be forgiven. When God forgives sin He means He does not hold it against us. Note those words "blameless, unblameable, unproveable" in the King James Version. God knows we are sinners. God isn't hoodwinking Himself; He isn't fooling Himself for a moment; "He remembereth our frame, He knoweth that we are dust." But He forgives our sins. He does not hold them against us.

To the Romans, you will remember, St. Paul, as he tries to build a picture of how this works, actually uses the Old Testament ark of the covenant, and he says that the blood of Jesus Christ, that is to say, His death, His sacrifice of Himself, is the device by which God is enabled to have mercy. Oh, squeeze that word "mercy" by which God is enabled not to hold the sins of men against them. It is the Old Testament picture of *kaphar* (*iom kippur*), the covering through the blood of the covenant of the sins of the people, screening them away from the thrust and the wrath of His judgment. Instead God comes forgiving, with fatherly healing in His wings, and restores to sonship as many as believe on His name. "To them gave He power to become the sons of God."

To tell men that God so forgives for Jesus' sake is the Gospel. But you have to *say* the Gospel — you have to say it! You have to cause people to think it. Gospel is simply that you

cause them to think of God's forgiveness for them by telling them that in Christ He has already forgiven the sins of the world.

This is the great truth of what we call, in a phrase that is clumsy but with a fact that is inescapable, objective justification. The forgiveness is already there. We are not to come to our people saying: "If you will believe, if you will play God for a minute — and you are bigger than God, you see, because you don't have to believe if you don't want to — but if you will do God the favor now by accepting this, then you will cause God to forgive your sins." This "if" is such a terrible distortion of the Christian Gospel. It simply pulls its vitality right out from its heart. God has already forgiven. The forgiveness is already there because of Jesus Christ.

The first Easter evening Jesus Christ gave His definitions of preaching the Gospel and of the Christian's witness to it. He said: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Jesus Christ to suffer and the third day to rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins might be preached." Actually the preferable reading says, "Repentance to the forgiveness of sins." The forgiveness is already there, and preaching is the business of turning people through God's mighty power and the proclamation of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ to reach out and grasp this forgiveness which is already there.

What causes the people to accept the forgiveness? The parable of the Prodigal Son paints it before us: remembering that it is already there. If

you preach this Gospel "iffy," it is no Gospel at all. If you hedge it about with human half-truths, make God do only half of it, make God forgive because we believe in Him, that becomes a Gospel that would be better presupposed, better never preached at all. But, says the apostle — and notice how in Colossians he always writes himself into the story — "I am God's minister to do this to you. I am God's minister who brought you into the fellowship of this mystery, this magnificent unfolding of a fact that you wouldn't know at all without the Gospel." Notice how he says he is anxious, he strains, he grinds, he quakes, he quivers, he goes into agony over this thing so that they get this, but always this, the forgiveness of sins that is already there; for when Jesus Christ died on the cross, it was finished. It didn't take a bunch of little people to finish God's forgiveness.

True, there was an unfinished task, and St. Paul said that he filled up the measure of the sufferings of Christ. He, the preacher, agonizes over the people under persecution and strain, that men might be brought face to face with this precious gift of forgiveness through the blood of Christ; for that is the way that they get it, that a man preaches it to them — boldly, unafraid, agonizingly, tense, oh, so anxious that by all means they might see it.

Colossians uses another set of ideas to set forth the atonement. God gave Jesus to die for our sins. That is what we are baptized into. He raised Him from the dead to show who He is; it is

His new life that we are raised into by our baptism.

And still another picture that the apostle uses in Colossians One for the atonement is the concept of peace. It is from God. God reaches out to us to make peace. He reaches in to reconcile. It isn't that we do Him the favor of acting peaceable; but He reaches in. He calls us into one body, and now the peace of God (Colossians Three) which passes all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds in Him. Now we are kept by this peace, that is to say, this free, unrestrained, fatherly, loving reach of God into our lives, because Jesus Christ died on the cross for us and rose again.

And you see that every time you preach this Gospel you are firming up and confirming the tie of this peace. You are bringing people again under its mighty spell. You are causing people again to be brought up into the sunlight of God's own life and light in Christ Jesus. And if you don't preach it, you don't do it.

How very important this is in the light of what happens when we don't preach the Gospel! There are men, good Christian men, Christian preachers, who celebrate the sacraments, confirm well-indoctrinated confirmation classes, preach nice 25-, 30-, sometimes 35-minute sermons, but they do not speak the Gospel. My colleague Doctor Bartling calls them presupposers, and riding on his ticket I call their malady the vice of presuppositionitis. This sickness clutches at a man, particularly if he uses his worst hours for the preparation of his preach-

ing, as I am sure so many of you do, your fatigued hours, your cramped and hasty hours. Your best ones are for the sick and for the fund raising and for skittering about from point to point in your community and for coming to meetings like this; but your little pinched hours, your little tired hours are the ones in which you prepare your preaching.

As you are sitting there under the lamp at 2 A. M. — you tell yourself this is the best time, for the baby isn't crying — very tired and kept awake only by cigarets and coffee, you have a mental vision of next Sunday morning. "There sit those people and I can already see their fishy stares. Why has this preacher of ours no imagination? Why can't he sound like Dr. Oswald Hoffmann? Why does he always say the same thing over and over again?" You worry that your congregation thinks of you as the writer of the Letters from Xanadu thinks about his Pastor Zeitgeist: "He preaches and I want to stand up and say, 'What's new?'" And so the fatigued preacher finds Romans 1:16 and Colossians One and Two and John 3:16 too threadbare. "I'm lucky at least that it isn't Lent, when I really have to preach this. Let me find something new. How did Buttrick do it in Harvard Yard?" Buttrick didn't succeed too well, if you wonder. "How did Spurgeon do it?" Spurgeon did it very well, provided you can find the good passages.

Finally by 3 A. M., with the baby still quiet, the preacher says: "I think I have something new for Sunday morning. This will curl their hair!"

It will probably not be Gospel, because you can't dream up a new way of saying the Gospel. There are many ways, but they are all old. The Gospel is always in the past tense. It always concerns the things that the Lord Jesus said constitute Gospel: His suffering, death, and rising again. I'll grant you that it has to be preached in the present tense too. It has to be preached to people now about their concerns right now. But what's Gospel about it is the old, old story, the story of mercies that are new every morning.

Every morning of the year I have the same menu for breakfast. This morning my hostess was my sweet daughter-in-law; and somewhere she had been briefed, I had to make no suggestions, there it was. Am I sick of the staleness of that breakfast? No, no, I need it! I wouldn't have been able to stagger up here without it. It's wonderful! It's what the doctor ordered! It's a gift of God—even if it is very much the same every day.

So I think that the fatigue which causes us to be silent about the old Gospel is a piece of the kingdom of the devil. The fatigue complex of the ministry — I'll supplement Doctor Friedrich in this — among other things causes our preachers to silence the Gospel because they want to stir their audiences with something new. It's too bad that congregations can't sometimes stand up and ask the next question: "So *that's* new?" — the substitute probably wasn't so new either; by 3 A. M. the preacher reasons that anything will have to do.

No, let's preach the Gospel, be in-

stant in season, out of season, in bringing to our people the Word of Christ's death and resurrection that is the new power of God because it is His everlasting mercy.

*Hence This Gospel Has to Be Preached
to Christian and Non-Christian
Without Distortion*

So, brethren, let's be careful of the erosion that sets in when we don't preach the Gospel. Spiritual life is much like the physical situation. People live in a bath of germs. No matter when you washed last, you are surrounded on every side and coated on inner linings with a good layer of germs. If your resistance is up, if you've had your food, your vitamins, and your rest, they don't penetrate. But the moment that you cave in somewhere, one germ shouts to the others, "Come on, boys, let's go," and in they climb into your system and organize your particular battery of ailments.

Transfer the analogy to the spiritual life. You are thinking of the little people to whom you are going to preach. But here are you, the first man to listen to the sermon which you are preparing and preaching. On every side of you are pressing in these principalities, these powers of the infernal kingdom. You are infested in your own mind, says the Second Chapter, with the fleshly way of thinking which the apostle calls philosophy, the love of human ways of thought. You are harboring the rudimentary concepts and motivations of behavior — he calls them *stoicheia* — which are quite different from God's way and Spirit. They

are pressing in. A good healthy Christian casts these off and thrusts them aside. But he does so only as he remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the one antidote, the one prophylactic, the one power that keeps us in God's kingdom, free from the invasion of the devil.

But as you preach to yourself or as you preach to your people, as you summon to faith and to life and to meet the challenges of our time and to defend oneself against the ills to which the human race in general and the Missouri Synod in particular is prey — if you don't take the prophylactic and hand it on, if you don't preach the Gospel of God to yourself and others, the head demon, whose name is Satan, shouts to all the others, "Come on, men, let's go!"

Hence presupposing the Gospel is the first great invitation to erosion of Christian life and faith, in preacher and people. For the Evil One rejoices in finding a man that gives him the opportunity to use the means of disgrace by not using the means of grace, the Gospel of God. He rejoices in a preacher who causes people to think of themselves rather than think about God and His Christ. The Gospel puts into us Jesus Christ, the hope of glory, says Colossians One. Presupposing puts people into people. It leaves them brooding over their own sin in the self-righteousness of contrition; or offering up their own works in the self-righteousness of human deeds.

The Missouri Synod isn't immune from the blight of the gospel of decision and surrender that descends upon

us from the vocal and well-advertised revivalistic groups. Surrender yourselves to Jesus! Give yourselves to Jesus! Out of gratitude give yourselves to Jesus, live for Jesus, be all for Jesus! Certainly the good man, God's man, seeks to surrender his members as servants of righteousness to Jesus. All of these imperatives: Believe! Love! Surrender! are good Biblical imperatives. But the moment that you do not hook them up with the power pack of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ you imperil your listener with the temptation to become his own Savior. If you shout to the driver of a transport truck, "This is your load," and point to the huge box-car-size trailer, it will stand inert and putrefy unless you put that driver in a tractor unit, gassed up and oiled and throbbing with the power.

Our preaching falls into the trap of imperative without power in our preaching of good works. We say: "You must do them, you must do them out of gratitude." If that is all you say, the hearer peers within himself and says, "What do you know? I am out of gratitude." It is terribly important that as you preach and make those demands, you say the things which put the gratitude there, you say the words which cause Christ, the Victor over sin, death, the devil, hell, Law, to come moving into your life and take you captive and keep you His man. That comes not as you presuppose and not as you simply speak of the results and objectives of His work, but that comes only as you talk His work, as you preach the blood, as you proclaim

the Cross. The preaching of the Cross is foolishness, not only because we have a built-in idea that redemption is miraculous but because to us the miracle of miracles is that preaching the Cross can do anything. In 1 Corinthians 1 St. Paul isn't correcting merely the skepticism about the work of Christ and His redemption, but he's trying to pull us away from a low-level attitude toward the preaching of redemption.

So let us use the imperatives as the Bible sets them before us. Love one another! Colossians Three has whole lists like that; incidentally, none of them include appeals to decide for Christ or to surrender to Him. But as you use those imperatives, never, never on pain of death, your own and the death of your people, sever from those imperatives the power pack that makes it possible for the people to follow them.

St. Paul said to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But then he spent hours in the same night talking about what that means, telling him how it was possible, unfolding before him Jesus Christ, who died also for the Gentiles, and in the morning he baptized the jailer and his whole household.

So let's always put the two together. Let's not presuppose that our people are thinking the Gospel when we are not preaching it. Let's not even risk the little distance from the sermon through the offering out into Holy Communion, where they are going to be looking again at the forgiveness of

their sins; and then let's not play with the Sacrament of the Altar as just a sacrifice of ourselves to God. There is some sacrificing of ourselves to God going on in the service of which the sacrament is a part; but oh, let's stress that the sacrament is the body and blood, the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins.

Our own time has other erosions of the Gospel. The great erosion of self-righteousness is discussed at the beginning of Colossians Two. It is spelled out plainly, and the words of the epistle can refresh our thinking well. But let us face one unique in our own time, the erosion of individualism. Many Protestants whom you are reading are saying, "Marxism forgets the value of the individual; we must remember the value of the individual." All right. Jesus Christ died for each one of us. The Holy Spirit knocks at the door of each one of us with the message of His Cross. But that isn't the end. We have been called by that message into one body, says Colossians. Our people have been drawn together to love one another. Their calling in life is to love people, many of whom they have never seen, in missions on the other side of the globe. They are in the business not just of loving God for the sake of raising a budget, but they are called by God to love people, one another, with a love that is the perfect bond of virtues. Make the body of Christ, the membership of the individual member of the church to each other one, a potent, powerful meaning

for your people; but to that end preach — preach the Gospel of God, by which Jesus Christ has called us as members into this body.

But let us start with ourselves. You begin with your morning devotions with your wives, doubtless. We are reading *Day by Day We Magnify Thee* by Steiner and Scott, this little collection of Luther sayings. Sometimes halfway through we have to stand up and walk around a bit and pour another cup of coffee because he has hit us between the eyes on being nothing before God of ourselves but everything by Him through Christ.

Be sure to break the Bread of Life with your wife and children at the start of the day and the end of the day. Be sure that you fold your hands over the gift of the Gospel to yourself and your parish, together with your school staff and your janitor and your secretary and whoever else is in the orbit of the office at the start of the day, and confront the redeeming work of Jesus Christ in it.

And in the night watches — certainly

you may have to work late some nights, and perhaps not just for preaching but just for facing yourself and wondering why things aren't better — discover when nobody is stirring that you haven't been stirring much either, by yourself. Face yourself that there is not only physical but spiritual fatigue that can sap your ministry and that of your co-workers in your circuit. And then pull down Colossians, and pray the Small Catechism, Articles One and Two and Three, straight through without stopping. Then go to your favorite word of Gospel — every one of you has a different one — but go to it, your word about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, go to it and eat. And you will rise up with strength as an eagle.

Even the young men will fail, but as God speaks to us through the blood and the resurrection of His Son, we shall all mount up as eagles, and we shall find power for ourselves, for our co-workers in circuit and Synod, for our parishes, for our whole dear Synod, for the whole Christian church — the power of God unto salvation.

"Holding Fast to the Head . . . That in Everything He Might Be Pre-eminent"

By HARRY G. COINER

I. BY HIM IS THE SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PURPOSE IN US AND THE POWER TO DO HIS WILL

Col. 1:9-23, 29; 2:6-19; 3:1-3;

2 Tim. 1:8-14

I should like to introduce the topic at hand by sketching two scenes, one from real life and one imaginary. The first scene is real and is set in a mess tent at the Boy Scout Jamboree this past July in Colorado. Eating at the table with me was a psychiatrist, a member of a Christian church, his family historically and longtime Anglican. He is expressing concerns about his church and the church in general. He is quite blunt, but he is honest in his views. He says, "The Christian faith is a wonderful thing because of what God has done in Christ and still does. If only the people in the church would trust God to do what He has promised to do, but they certainly mess up a good thing by getting in the act in the wrong way. They get confused and mixed up in pietism and legalism, and make Christianity no more than being kind to an old grandmother or to the family cat or they reduce the whole thing to not doing this or that."

The second scene is imaginary, but it could be real. It takes place when *Look* magazine sends a crew of photographers and reporters to Jack and Jim's congregation. Jack, the reporters discovered, had all the marks of the ideal

1960 church member. He was active on several committees, he was sociable, progressive; he worked for bigger and better financial budgets, and he took the lead to improve the church plant and attendance at church services. Jack's picture was taken showing him presenting the plans for complete air-conditioning to the assembled voters. The picture caption read, when this imaginary *Look* issue was published, "Church Leader in Action," and quoted Jack as saying, "I enjoy church work. I get a lot out of it. Last year our finance committee raised \$126,000, and we plan to put in \$30,000 worth of air-conditioning this year. The church stands for what is best in America and everybody ought to believe in God."

When the pastor suggested that the reporters interview Jim, they found nothing especially glamorous about him, but they noted that he taught in the Sunday school, that his wife spent two days each week as a volunteer nurse in the local hospital, that his son was a youth counselor and sang in the choir, and that his daughter was studying to be a teacher in the church's schools. They also noted that Jim and his wife called regularly on shut-ins and were regular members of the EMV teams. One of the reporters suspected that he had something unusual here, although at this point he didn't quite know what it was, but with pencil in

hand he plunged in and asked, "Jim, what does the church mean to your family?"

Jim replied, "It may be a long answer. Do you want it?" The reporter said, "Yes, I do." So Jim said, "Our family believes that people are only the dust of the field until God calls them and makes them members of Christ's own body, the Holy Christian Church. God has blessed our family in a special way and given us to know and believe that we are His chosen people (not exclusive of others, but with others) through whom He in Christ is carrying out His redemptive purposes in the world. To that high calling and task we are committed and held by Christ's direction and power."

"Do you mean," the reporter broke in, almost with a gulp, "that you feel you have a special call from God to do church work?"

"Not only the call, but also the strength to do it," Jim replied. "That is what St. Paul is talking about in Colossians and 2 Timothy, and what I hope our Fiscal Conference is studying at Valparaiso this week. St. Paul says that the church consists of the people of God because of the action of God and that in the church the life of its members is given, nourished, and activated by what Christ gives through Word and Sacrament."

"That centers everything in Christ, doesn't it?" the reporter broke in.

"Everything must be centered in Christ," Jim replied, "because without Christ and His power at work in His people, you would have just another 'onward and upward socializing club,'

religious and all of that, but not a Christian church."

"You have an interesting slant there," the reporter said. "Most people don't see things that sharply, do they?"

"The fact is, there are two ways that people have of looking at religion, as I see it," Jim responded. "Some people think of religion as a way of getting something out of God. They go to church and they do church work and they actually believe that they have a good thing going in the church, something like a good deal. But the true Christian is sure of God and trusts that God has a good thing going in him."

"I see," the reporter commented.

"The apostle Peter hooked it all up this way," Jim went on, "'As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: . . . whoever renders service, let him do it in the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.' Do you see what I mean?"

At this point we leave the conversation, hoping that these two sketches point up the fact that in church activity we must watch what we are doing and pray for grace while we are doing it, else what we do can become quite irrelevant and irreverent. Our life in the church is always in grace and in faith. By God's grace we are the church, and in faith what we do in the church pleases God. In our human weakness and sin we are so easily led by Satan into the terrible treason of

doing the right thing for the wrong reason.

Now what applies to individual Christians also applies to congregations of them. Unhappily there are some congregations suffering from success, the kind of success that one places in quotation marks. Daniel Walker in his recent book, *The Human Problems of the Minister*, suggests that you move among your brother pastors at a typical pastoral conference and ask each one you greet, "Well, how are things going?" and see what kind of answers you get. One will tell you how his building is proceeding, another will tell you his total Easter attendance, some enterprising brother will tell you of the sociological survey he is making in his congregation, others will say that they met the budget and had enough left over to make a down payment on a new parsonage. Few indeed will mention the books they are reading, the theological problems they are seeking to untangle, and few will speak of the difficulties they are having in their efforts to relate the Gospel to the lives of their people and so awaken in them a sense of Christian responsibility. Now I know that buildings and programs are tangible and easy to latch on to in answer to so general a question as "How are things going?" but do men answer in these terms because they are thinking in these terms and because they don't know what else to say? One is reminded in this connection of the pilot who was asked by a passenger, "How are we doing?" The pilot answered, "We're lost, but we're making good time."

Now the question comes: Are we more concerned with the success of the church than with being the children of God? Does our success, or our drive for success, tempt us to undue occupation with the marks of it: fine church buildings and schools and equipment, good salaries, fringe benefits and all the rest, and thus mayhap make us like Dives who feasted while Lazarus sat empty at the gate?

St. Paul is saying to us in Colossians and 2 Timothy: "Get with the risen Christ and His Gospel. Get under His grace and power. Don't dare try to do anything in the church unless you trust all the way in what has happened to you in your baptism and what Christ will work in you through Word and Sacrament. Derive your life and activity from Him. Get your direction and power from Him. He is the Head of the body, the First-born from the dead. From the risen Christ life flows out through all the members of His body. Your faith and obedience and quiet service are nourished by the forgiveness of sins and the reality of baptism which kills the old man and creates the new man who comes forth daily to face with joy the doing of the Word of God.

II. IN HIM IS ALL PRIORITY OF SERVICE AND COHESION OF ACTION

Col. 1:16-20; 2:5, 8, 16-23; 3:17, 23-24;
2 Tim. 1:7, 13-15; 2:5, 23; 3:5-7, 14; 4:2-5

God's people are to seek above all else to do the will of Christ and be the church. They are to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and share them to build up and maintain the faith and life of all of them. They are not merely

a body of Christians, a "bouquet of believers," but they are the body of Christ. He is the Head of the body, and in Him centers all priority of service and cohesion of action. Christ makes the church what it is, because the body is nothing at all without the Head. Congregations serve the Gospel, not because they are active, well-organized, and prosperous, but because God made the people, redeemed the people, and dwells in the people, working in and through them — and the people believe this. The church is always the church because of what God does and never because the people are busy in it. This is so obvious that often it is the one thing we fail to see.

In Colossians and 2 Timothy the apostle sets up the alternatives. He says, "You are a living organism of which Christ is the life and animating force. You are not a body of Christians who perpetuate the teachings and practices of Jesus Christ, but *the* body of Christ Himself. Therefore, the following of human tradition, the giving over to the elemental spirits of the universe such as secularism, humanism, greed, lust, covetousness, success-seeking, self-gratification, and self-glory will disqualify you and rob you of your true nature and being. If you are distracted or side-tracked by unworthy quarrels, beliefs, or practices, your flesh will take over and you will be timid and weak for the battle, vessels unfit for noble use, not ready for those good works which God planned for you to do."

There are very definite implications which may be drawn out of this for the

objectives and activities involved in parish administration.

Parish administration, if it has anything at all to do with God's people being the church, is rooted always in what God is doing through Word and Sacrament in the lives of men and women and children, and in how they are growing up in every way into Him who is the Head, and being filled with Him who fills all in all. The administration of a congregation, rightly understood in Gospel terms, is a way of ordering the life of God's people so that the spiritual activities related to their true nature and task (their being gathered and their gathering) may be carried on effectively. Dr. R. R. Caemmerer affirms this when he says in *The Pastor at Work*, "Parish administration trains people and gives people the opportunity or setting for bringing Law and Gospel to one another and to the world."

There are at least two perversions possible in parish administration. The first is that the organizational beehive — activated, departmentalized, structured, and set in motion with a place for everybody and everybody in his place, whether he likes it or not — may become the monster which sucks the pastoral ministry and the ministry of the people into itself and makes the pastor and people its ministers rather than ministers of Jesus Christ. The other perversion is the organization which is designed and structured to give the people in the church the routine tasks, that is, the secular, operational, technical tasks, while the pastor deals with the specifically Christian

work. In other words, the people are enlisted at the borders of church life and are there allowed to exhaust their energy. These perversions are gross and obvious and need no illumination other than to say that church leaders must learn to walk with grace and holy balance on the thin line between the mechanics, which implement the action, and the action itself. The mechanics are no more to be despised than is the action, but the two must be viewed whole and not separated or confused. If they are, you have the same situation as you find in the person who thinks that his uniform makes him a soldier, or in the pastor who thinks that the *Concordia Pulpit* makes him a sermonizer.

In congregational activity there are several subtle pitfalls which ought to be described for what they are, and which must, of necessity, be avoided. When the activities of the church are structured, the focus is not to be on the preaching and teaching of the Word exclusive of the needs of the people to do, as St. James says, the Word. The preaching and the teaching is to yield something very tangible and concrete. The preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments may lead to passivism if and when the needs of the people to be guided and directed to do specific things in specific ways, and often at specific times, are neglected. The pastor is to feed the people, but he is also to guide and direct the people. If the focus, on the other hand, is only on the needs of the people to do, this

often leads to activism, to the doing of something or anything, whatever the pastor or people feel the need to do. Ofttimes and most times, such accidental busy-ness has little relation to the Gospel.

In congregational activity, again, blueprintism (and I mean by this the acceptance uncritically of the plans of others) is a tempting escape from the honest spadework of program development based on the needs of the people to do under the Gospel what they see (in faith) to do. "Canned" programs make it possible to run a successful parish without ever raising a theological question, except perhaps, "Why don't they send us better programs?" The improper use of "canned" programs can be escape from the responsible freedom which each Christian has of looking ever anew into the depths of the mysteries of God, and responding in faith to God's claim upon him. To speak of blueprintism in this wise is not to say that there is no place for planning in the church on any level by those gifted to do it. The doing of things decently and in order in the church is certainly a divinely appointed working principle according to 1 Cor. 14, as is the doing of all things unto edification, in the same chapter. The proper use of planned programs brings purpose and continuity to what may otherwise be haphazard ambiguity. Without planning, time runs out like water in the sand.

If there is anything worse than blueprintism (understood in the bad sense), it is structurelessness in the church, the

mere waiting for something to happen. Not willing to trust the "experts" (whom God gives to minister to us, to guide and direct us), and not willing to seek the answers themselves by doing the work necessary to build their own program (hammered out and fashioned on the anvil of their needs to do under the Gospel), the pastor and people sit and wait until forced either to do something or close up shop. Since very few close up shop, the people who really care about the church may pray for a call to remove the pastor or they ask for a transfer.

Again, churches may confuse ends and means. A classic example of this is to get by the Law what can be gotten only by the Gospel. Perhaps there is good church attendance, good giving, good order in the Sunday school — all gotten by the lever of the Law. But the people are Pharisees, not Christians, having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof. An illustration of the confusing of ends and means, in another sense, may be a situation of this sort: A campaign for \$80,000, say, for a new building may be successful. When the "thanksgiving report" is made, where is the focus (the thanksgiving)? Is it on the money raised, on the faithful work of the campaign committee, on the building now possible and shining in bright colors in the architect's sketches? Or is the focus (the thanksgiving) on the growth in the grace of giving; on that which has happened in the lives of God's people in this common effort of faith and prayer and purpose; and on

what the building itself will mean as a setting for the intake of Word and Sacrament, as a place of worship and witness?

St. Paul says, "Good order and sound faith in the church requires that whatever you do in word or deed, do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to the Father by Him." In other words, "Do what you do because of Jesus Christ and let Him have the credit." Also from St. Paul: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord, and not men [yourselves]." When the church lives and works under the lordship of Jesus Christ, Christian or Gospel things happen. People will reach toward ends which are Christian when they are under the Gospel and open to the working of the Holy Spirit.

To sum up this section: One may say that the greatest perversion in the church today is that it sees itself as an institution geared for religious, moral, and social purposes instead of believing itself in New Testament terms as a body to be actually indwelt by Christ, and so fashioned into His instrument for the continuation of His redemptive purposes in the present day. And just as one can keep God at arm's length by knowing a lot about Him, so, by the movement of a program, can people be inoculated against the disturbing and costly continual dying and arising with Christ, to live in immediate communion with Him and with fellow Christians, with His mission as the primary concern of their existence. In Him is all priority of service and cohesion of action.

III. FOR HIM A FAITHFUL AND SALUTARY WITNESS TO HIS GRACE AND GLORY

Col. 3:7, 12-21; 4:5, 6; 2 Tim. 2:18-26;
3:5-10, 14; 4:18

The church's life begins with God, and the unceasing movement of God into His people through the gracious and active work of the Holy Spirit brings growth in unity, love, and steadfastness. The people of the world know nothing of the nature of this life at all. They give themselves over to selfishness, self-gratification, and exploitation. But Christians are in possession of new life, with power to live it, and this life becomes a witness to the lordship of Christ.

Therefore, knowing what the possibilities are for Christians, St. Paul says, "Earthly passions you can control and conquer. The old man you can kill. You can forgive because you are forgiven. You can express love and enjoy peace. You can fit in with one another out of reverence for Christ. In fact, you are intimately related to one another in Christ and you can live in love in the church, in the family, and in society with all men. What's more, you can speak proper and fitting words of the Gospel, of warning and admonition, of comfort and encouragement for the sake of one another as you are held to your common task."

Set apart for God, the members of the faith community are sent to the world to bear witness in word and deed as Christ's servants in and to the world. Nothing in the quality of their life should hinder or compromise that witness. In the face of abuse, slander, and treachery Christians go right on

being gentle and forbearing, keeping their witness pure, trusting Christ and the Gospel, praising God for His deeds, waiting joyfully for the final rescue.

The world, to be sure, notices the church. It isn't as invisible as we have sometimes thought it to be. The church is not a general idea that hovers, so to speak, above the world, but it is a concrete reality that exists within the world. The people of the world see its outward form, its buildings, its activities; they listen to its message and pronouncements now and again. The people of the world also watch the lives of the people of the church. Domination or self-assertion, exploitation or self-interest, the seeking of God for one's own sake or an office for the glory of it — all of this the world notices, thinks about, judges. One may say that the church is truly the church when the words the church people say match the integrity of the lives they lead. When "they don't mess up a good thing by getting in the act in the wrong way," to return to the language of our friend; when they trust God to do what He has promised to do; and when Christ gets the praise to the glory of God the Father, the church is on the right target.

One final word needs to be said. The church in our land is an impressive institution. The world has never seen its like. Yet one is saddened to know that in many places the church has been taken out of the service of God's disturbing and activating Gospel and has been humanized as an institution to provide men and women with the spiritual comfort and security they need

to keep personal and social life steady and secure.

We are to remember that the strength of the church never resides in its numbers or in its wealth or in its outward impressiveness. Its strength is always to be measured from within and is determined by the extent to which it is true to its nature as the body of Jesus Christ, as the servant of the Word of God, as the human instrument ready to answer when He calls and quick to go when and where He sends. When the church is what its Lord intended it to be, it is impregnable. But let the church be untrue to its calling and destiny, let it give itself in any measure into the service of any other lord or any other gospel, and, by that internal failure, it has laid itself open to destruction.

James D. Smart (*The Rebirth of Ministry*, 1960) says: "We are called to be the church of Jesus Christ. We are called to be His ministers. . . . In Him alone we see the church and the ministry fulfilled. . . . But where the

church and the ministry are complete there stands a cross, and it is into the church and ministry of a crucified Christ that we dare to enter — crucified, yet also risen. There is no entrance for us into our true ministry unless we die with Him and rise with Him into that newness of life which in His risen power He shares with those who are bonded together in fellowship with Him. And the reward of our ministry is just this — that He should count us worthy to be taken into fellowship with Him and to be members of His Body."

God works through what He gives. The Collect for yesterday is a most worthy prayer of the church: Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Scripture, Confessions, and Doctrinal Statements

By ARTHUR C. REPP

SCRIPTURE AND THE CONFESSIONS

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged. . . .¹

So the Formula of Concord declares for all to know that the Lutheran Church accepts only the Scriptures as the source and norm of divine truth. As for other writings, the Formula of Concord further declares that these are not on a par with Holy Scriptures.

Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.²

Thus the Confessions of the Lutheran Church are not the source of faith but, derived as they are from the Scriptures and in conformity with them, they are the norm or standard according to which the preaching and teaching of the Lutheran Church are to be judged.

Confessional Statements in the Early Church

The practice of making confessions dates back to apostolic times, traces of

which may be found in the New Testament.³ As time went on, confessions continued to be formulated as the need arose. Such confessions served various functions: as baptismal confessions, outlines for catechetical instruction, elements in liturgical services, identifications of Christians as distinct from heterodox, norms for preaching and administering the sacraments, confessions of belief, kerygmatic presentations of the Gospel, and instruments to distinguish the orthodox from the heretics.⁴ Among such confessional statements are the three great ecumenical creeds which were included in the Lutheran Symbols. They were unique in several ways. In the first place, they did not appear in their original form as they are now confessed by the church. Instead, during the centuries, additions were made as the Christian Church felt the need to sharpen them. The Apostles' Creed, as we now have it, dates from the eighth century and was a revision of the Old Roman Creed current in the West as early as the third century.⁵ The Nicene Creed dates back to the ninth century when the *filioque* was added. The creed as such dates back to 325, with some major additions

³ Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3; 15:3, 4, etc.

⁴ Erwin Lueker, "Function of Confessional Statements," outline of an essay presented to Concordia Seminary faculty, St. Louis, Oct. 29, 1959.

⁵ Tappert, p. 17.

¹ Epitome, Formula of Concord, 464:1. All citations from the Book of Concord are made from Tappert's edition, Muhlenberg Press, 1959.

² Ibid., 465:2.

in 381. The Athanasian Creed has an uncertain origin. It is very likely a formulation which dates back to the fifth or the sixth century.⁶

A second characteristic of the three ecumenical creeds is that they are comprehensive, setting forth the entire Christian doctrine in a brief manner. Thirdly, they are ecumenical creeds, i. e., statements which, at least in their earlier forms, were accepted by a large section of the Christian Church. Even in their later forms they were regarded as Christian creeds and not as a confession of a particular branch of the Christian Church.

The Lutheran Confessions

The Augsburg Confession was similar to the ecumenical creeds insofar that it was ecumenical and comprehensive. The Augsburg Confession was not intended originally to be a Lutheran confession, as we understand that term today. As the Formula of Concord describes it, it was "a genuinely Christian symbol which all true Christians ought to accept next to the Word of God, just as in ancient times Christian symbols and confessions were formulated in the church of God."⁷ The Augsburg Confession was to "serve the cause of unity"⁸ and to "offer and present a confession of our pastors' and preachers' teaching and of our own faith, setting forth how and in what manner, on the basis of the Holy Scrip-

tures, these things are preached, taught, communicated, and embraced in our lands, principalities, dominions, cities, and territories."⁹ The confessors invited the others to submit a similar statement with the hope that they would discuss both documents "in so far as this can be honorably done" for restoring unity.¹⁰ The Augsburg Confession goes to great pains to show that it is in harmony with the Scriptures and the teachings of the church fathers and thus in harmony with the ancient church. The confession was not intended to be sectarian or denominational, but a confession of the Christian Church which "covered almost the sum total of all Christian doctrine."¹¹

The symbols which were adopted later by the evangelical party were considered simply to be an elaboration of the doctrine set forth in the Augsburg Confession, for the latter was regarded as the norm. All doctrine was to be rejected and condemned when it was inconsistent "with the doctrine here set forth, as contrary to the prophetic and apostolic writings, the orthodox creeds, and our Christian Augsburg Confession."¹² Time and time again the various symbols in the Book of Concord declare that the symbols adopted after the Augustana were not intended to increase the scope of the confessional writings but were to show clearly in spite of the gainsayers that the evangelical party remained

⁶ Ibid., pp. 17 f.

⁷ Solid Declaration, Formula of Concord, 502:4. Also 504:5.

⁸ 26:14.

⁹ 25:8.

¹⁰ 25:10.

¹¹ Apology, 201:124.

¹² Solid Declaration, Formula of Concord, 609:88.

within the limits of the Augsburg Confession.¹³

Because the evangelical party regarded the Augsburg Confession as their basic symbol, they referred to themselves as "the churches of the Augsburg Confession."¹⁴ In accordance with this concept both Walther¹⁵ and Pieper¹⁶ spoke of the Augsburg Confession as *das Grundbekenntniss*. Many a cornerstone of the Lutheran Church bears the letters U. A. C. in recognition of this status.

This concept that the Augsburg Confession was the basic confession of the Lutheran Church and that the other symbols were simply elaborations of it was consistently followed by Walther. In 1856 he suggested free conferences of such Lutherans who acknowledged and confessed without reservation that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of

1530 was the pure and true statement of the doctrine of sacred Scripture. The purpose of these free conferences was to promote and advance the final establishment of one single Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.¹⁷

When someone suggested that discussion theses be drawn up for these conferences, Walther disagreed. Instead, he favored the idea that the discussion be limited to the Augustana with special references to the controversial questions of the day. This would serve as a basis for discussions in which everyone could participate without misgivings. If theses were drawn up, the conferences might go far afield in the discussions or become suspect that they were being directed in an arbitrary manner and were partisan. By limiting the discussion to the Augustana, the conference would be rewarded by the fact that they were under the protection of this symbol in confessing the truth and witnessing against error.¹⁸ Walther was ready to accept the Augustana as a minimum confession for the basis of the church union, although he regarded the Book of Concord as the optimum or the more desirable basis.

There is no doubt that the person who without reservation subscribes to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession cannot reject one single phrase in the other Confessions, inasmuch as these are nothing else than a further development and apology of that which is contained in the Augustana. Nevertheless, as church conditions have been here in the

¹³ Book of Concord, 13: "We are not minded to manufacture anything new by this work of agreement or to depart in any way at all, either in content or in formulation, from the divine truth that our pious forebears and we have acknowledged and confessed in the past, for our agreement is based on the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and is comprehended in the three creeds as well as in the Augsburg Confession. . . ." Cp. also p. 12.

This same thought is reflected concerning the Apology, 98:5; 504:6; concerning the Smalcald Articles, 505:7, and in the Formula of Concord, 633:6; 508:20.

The catechisms of Luther, which were not originally intended to be symbols, were included in the Book of Concord because they were a "brief compend and summary of all the Holy Scriptures," (316:3) and served as a norm of Lutheran doctrine for the laity.

¹⁴ Solid Declaration, Formula of Concord, 520:2; 535:73. Cp. also 574:41.

¹⁵ *Der Lutheraner*, XIII, 34.

¹⁶ Title of his book, *Das Grundbekenntniss der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1930.

¹⁷ *Lehre und Wehre*, II, 3—6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 86 and 88.

last decades and to some extent still are, there may well be many a genuine Lutheran who is loyal from the heart to the Augsburg Confession yet does not have a clear knowledge rightly to subscribe to the whole *Concordia*. Also such Lutherans are, without a doubt, our brethren. For that reason the free general conference should not adopt a basis by which it would give the impression of not being willing or able to extend the hand of brotherhood to all upright, honest Lutherans who hold that general Confession with us; nor should they, we feel, despair of the blessing which could easily come if their basis would make room for those Lutherans, who, with all firmness (*Entschiedenheit*) for the teaching of our basic Confession, still have scruples (*Bedenken*) concerning the capstone of our confessional structure, the *Formula Concordiae*. We believe one of the most important duties of the conference would be just this, to remove the uncertainties from the minds of those brethren who still harbor scruples against the consequent [consistent?] unfolding (*Durchfuehrung*) of the doctrine confessed at Augsburg and, by the grace of God, to lead them to the blessed, happy conviction that the other symbols of our Church are *implicite* contained in the Augustana, which they accept.¹⁹

Walther believed that the purpose of the Symbols was

a) that our Church clearly and unequivocally confess its faith and its doctrine before the world; b) that it distinguish itself from all heterodox bodies and sects; c) that it may possess

a united, certain, general form and norm of doctrine for all its teachers, on the basis of which all other writings and teachings can be judged and regulated.²⁰

Because these were the purposes which the Symbols were to serve and because he believed that the Evangelical Lutheran Church was "sure that the teaching contained in its Symbols is the pure truth of God because it agrees with the written Word of God in all points," it required of its members, especially its teachers, unreservedly to "confess and vow fidelity to its Symbols."²¹

Recent Confessional Statements Under the Confessions

The principle that all doctrinal teaching and preaching of the Lutheran Church must be submissive to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions became the "hallmark" of the men who founded the Missouri Synod. This was reflected in Article II, 1 and 2 of the Constitution adopted in 1847, and was declared to be an unalterable article (VII).

The principle to base all doctrinal discussion on the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions was rigidly adhered to by the Missourians in their discussions with other synods. In our own day, the same principle was followed with the formulation and the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 86. Translation by E. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856—1859," in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XV, 535 f.

²⁰ From an essay delivered to the Western District, 1858, and translated by Alex Guebert in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XVIII, 244 f.

²¹ Thesis XXI of *Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia Verlag, 1891), pp. 138 and 142.

adoption of the *Brief Statement* and the *Common Confession*.

In 1929 the Synod in convention at River Forest, Ill., rejected the revised *Chicago Theses* which had been formulated to serve as a possible basis for union with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo.²² As a consequence of this action, a committee was appointed by the Synod to formulate theses which, beginning with the controversial issues which existed between Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, were "to present the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, in the shortest, most simple manner."²³ What the committee actually did was to revise F. Pieper's statement, *Ich Glaube, Darum Rede Ich: Eine Kurze Darlegung der Lehrstellung der Missouri-Synode* of 1897, and produce what is now known as the *Brief Statement*. The instructions to the committee make it very clear that the *Brief Statement* was not intended to be a comprehensive statement and that it was intended to be under the Symbols and not an expansion of the scope of the Lutheran Confessions.

The *Common Confession* was drawn up for the purpose of establishing fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. When Part I was adopted in 1950 it was accepted "as a statement of these doctrines in harmony with Scriptures,"²⁴ without any reference to the

Lutheran Confessions. When, however, in 1956, Parts I and II were adopted as a single statement, the *Common Confession* was recognized as being "in harmony with the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions."²⁵

It is interesting to note that when Part I was adopted in 1950 an attempt was made to amend the acceptance with the following motion: "that it be understood that the acceptance of this document does not in any way affect our position as expressed in the *Brief Statement*." This motion was rejected. When the chair asked whether this rejection repudiated the *Brief Statement*, no one arose in answer.²⁶ From this it is clear that the *Common Confession* was not to be considered under the *Brief Statement* but alongside of it.

The *Common Confession* is not a comprehensive document. It does not claim to be a complete review of the Christian faith and life, but it manifests common insights and emphases in our understanding and formulation of many Christian doctrines as held and taught in our churches. It constitutes a common and united devotion of the Word of God and the teachings of our churches in our times.²⁷

From these illustrations taken from the first quarter century of our Synod's existence and from synodical conventions within our time, we have also the answer to the oft-repeated question, "Is there a need for statements applying Scripture and the Confessions to special situations in our time?" The

²² Buffalo, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Illinois.

²³ *Proceedings*, 1929, p. 113 (English) and p. 116 (German).

²⁴ *Proceedings* 1950, p. 585.

²⁵ *Proceedings*, 1956, p. 505.

²⁶ *Proceedings*, 1950, p. 586.

²⁷ *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 507.

answer is obviously "Yes." Each generation must meet the questions that arise out of the life and practice of the church of its day. The scope of such confessional statements is limited by our history. As Lutherans we cannot go beyond the Holy Scriptures and the Augustana and certainly not beyond the Holy Scriptures and the Book of Concord.

RESOLUTION NINE

In the light of the historic position of the Lutheran Church, and more particularly of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, how are we to evaluate Resolution 9 which was presented by the Committee on Doctrinal Matters and adopted by the Synod in convention in San Francisco in 1959?²⁸ The avowed purpose of this resolution was to have the Synod express itself as to the binding force of the "*Brief Statement* as well as other statements on doctrine and practice formally adopted by Synod," since pastors, teachers, and professors of the Synod at the time "of their ordination and installation pledged themselves to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions." The problem was not an academic one because the "whereases" of the resolution are tied up with the objective of Synod which is to "exercise supervision over such pastors and teachers as to doctrine, practice, and performance of their official duties." As we evaluate Resolution 9 we will look at each of its parts in an earnest effort to determine the

scope and meaning of the total resolution.

Section A

Section A states that in this resolution it is reaffirming "that every doctrinal statement of a confessional nature adopted by Synod as a true exposition of the Holy Scriptures is to be regarded as public doctrine (*publica doctrina*) in Synod." There are two very significant points in this section of the resolution. In the first place, no reference is made to the Lutheran Confessions, as a norm; simply the reference to the Holy Scriptures. The traditional formula is "the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions." Unless we wish to interpret Section A in the light of the first "whereas" which does mention the Lutheran Confessions, this section may leave the impression that the traditional scope of what is truly Lutheran has now been expanded beyond that of the Lutheran Confessions. This may be the "new look" for Missouri, although it is more than likely that it was simply an oversight, startling as it may appear.

The second point that strikes us in this resolution is that it is an omnibus statement, failing to mention specifically which doctrinal statements of a confessional nature the Synod had in mind. When the Formula of Concord speaks of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church it is very careful to define which symbols are included. The Constitution of the Synod in Article II likewise clearly circumscribes the scope of the confessional basis of the Synod. In this, Resolution 9 is very indefinite.

Since the implications of this resolution affect every pastor, teacher, and

²⁸ *Proceedings*, 1959, p. 191. Cp. also p. 78.

professor of the Synod as well as its laity, we must determine for ourselves what the scope of this resolution is, or might be, by examining various official proceedings of the Synod. Resolution 9 obviously includes the *Brief Statement* and the *Common Confession* and these, as we have already noted, were placed under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. It also includes Article II of the Constitution which sets forth the confessional norm of our Synod. But there are many other official doctrinal statements of a confessional nature which the Synod has from time to time adopted in its history. Within the time allowed for this essay it will be impossible to enumerate all of them. We shall merely cite a few examples from the first quarter century of our history and a few more recent ones in order to illustrate the problem we face as we attempt to define the scope of section A of the resolution.

In 1851 Walther presented 19 theses on the "Church and Ministry" to the Synod assembled in Milwaukee. Each thesis was supported by the Scriptures, the Confessions, and the Lutheran theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries. The 19 theses were discussed at length in 8 separate sessions and to each thesis the Synod gave its assent (*ihre Beistimmung gab*). When the theses were adopted the Synod authorized that they be printed, together with the supporting data. They later appeared in the well-known book, *Kirche und Amt* (*The Church and the Ministry*).²⁹ The following year the Synod

in convention authorized its secretary to send Grabau a copy of this book with the hope that he and the Buffalo Synod might be won over to the position of the Missouri Synod and see that the Missouri Synod's stand "was in harmony with the consensus of the Lutheran Church." If it should happen that he was not fully convinced, the Synod was prepared to send a committee to discuss the matter privately or publicly with him.³⁰ Obviously, *Kirche und Amt* is one of the documents included in section A.

In 1860 a set of propositions was presented in two parts treating the topic "Concerning the Inner Relationship of the Doctrine of Absolution and Justification." The first part consisted of eight theses. The propositions were read in their entirety and then the theses were discussed separately. Only the first six theses were discussed because it was stated that Theses Seven and Eight did not properly belong to the *Referat* and because there was not time for Part II. Unfortunately, the secretary was not as accurate in setting forth the action of the convention with reference to each of the theses although the discussion was summarized in 19 pages. In reference to some of the theses, however, it was specifically stated that they were adopted.³¹

In 1866 the Synod discussed some of the theses which were to serve as basis for part of the discussion by a com-

³⁰ *Proceedings*, 1852, p. 212 (second edition).

³¹ *Proceedings*, 1860, pp. 40—58. Thesis II was adopted ("so ward er ohne weitere Diskussion angenommen"), p. 47, and the third point of Thesis VI, p. 58.

²⁹ *Proceedings*, 1851, p. 170 (second edition).

mittee selected to consider union with the Buffalo Synod. Three of the four theses were discussed in four sessions.³²

That an adoption of these theses did not simply imply a general agreement with the substance of the matter, but was to be taken seriously, can be seen when one brother expressed some misgiving over a point. In the next session after further discussion had taken place, he was asked to commit himself. This he did to the satisfaction of the Synod "in which he bore testimony that he was in full agreement with the Synod also in this matter."³³ Later in the same convention the Synod ordered that the theses be printed together with a commentary so that they could be further studied and discussed at the district synods.³⁴

Because there was some trouble in his New York congregation on the question of taking interest, the Rev. Theodore J. Brohm in 1869 presented a set of theses on "Usury." In the first session he read the 14 theses, after which they were discussed and 4 were adopted. Again, it is very clear that these discussions were not academic. They were taken very seriously and the Synod did not hesitate to amend the theses when it was not fully satisfied with them.³⁵

There was considerable debate on the first of Brohm's theses. After it had been discussed for the greater part of three sessions, lasting approximately two to two and one half hours each,

someone made the motion to continue with the next thesis. This motion was earnestly opposed by several of the brethren because it was stated that the "Synod was not in the habit of closing debate upon any important doctrine before everyone was convinced and unity restored and there was no good reason to depart in the present instance." Because the time of adjournment had come, the motion was not called and the discussion continued for the greater part of the next session. Thesis 1 was finally adopted in an amended form.³⁶

Obviously, these and perhaps many more doctrinal statements of a confessional nature have been adopted by Synod and are within the scope of section A of Resolution 9. In more recent times, similar statements have been adopted. In some cases they were very brief. For instance, in 1950 there had been some agitation in the Synod because of the St. Louis seminary's opinion on engagement. As a result of this, the Synod resolved

that we hold to the position expressed in our synodical catechism in Question 61, which reads: "What is Marriage?" "Marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman unto one flesh. Marriage was instituted by God and is entered into by rightful betrothal, or engagement."³⁷

Here we have not only a doctrinal statement of a confessional nature but

³² *Proceedings*, 1866, pp. 39 ff.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁵ *Proceedings*, 1869, pp. 51—85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72. See also an unofficial report and translation of the proceedings as reprinted by the Fort Wayne *Democrat*: "Proceedings of the General German Lutheran Synod of the United States and Canada," esp. p. 8 [1869].

³⁷ *Proceedings*, 1950, p. 659.

one which went beyond the scope of the Lutheran Confessions.

In contrast to such a short confessional statement, we have what may appear by inference to be the inclusion of the entire three volumes of Dr. F. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*. In 1938 a delegate had objected to the assertion "that women are not to vote in the congregation." In answer to this objection a committee reported and the Synod accepted, "according to our dogmatician, Dr. F. Pieper, in his *Christliche Dogmatik*, Vol. I, p. 525 ff., it is the accepted position and practice of Synod that women shall not be granted voting membership in the Christian congregation."³⁸ Here we have an interesting example in which the Synod by inference declared that three volumes which had never been officially accepted, set forth the "public doctrine" of the Synod.

The acceptance of the *Statement on Scripture* which was passed by the San Francisco convention after the adoption of Resolution 9, reflects the new criterion of Resolution 9 without specifically referring to it. The *Statement on Scripture* was accepted because it was based on the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and contained nothing new and was in harmony with "the Lutheran Confessions and with the public teaching (*publica doctrina*) of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod."³⁹ Here *publica doctrina* is set forth as one of the criteria and we have the possibility that a new element for judg-

ment has been introduced. The reference to Dr. Pieper's *Dogmatics*, referred to above, indicates that *publica doctrina* is not necessarily coextensive with "every doctrinal statement of a confessional nature adopted by Synod." If this interpretation is correct, then Resolution 6 may have much wider significance than is commonly supposed. For those who were present at the convention, the significance may merely be that it is reflecting Resolution 9, Section A, and may not imply anything beyond the scope of that resolution. Yet this is not explicitly stated in Resolution 6, nor will it necessarily be remembered a generation from now that Resolution 6 was adopted after Resolution 9.

Section B

Section B of Resolution 9 requires that pastors, teachers, and professors of the Synod be "held to teach and act in harmony with such statements." The implications and the constitutionality of this statement cannot be determined until the scope of Section A has been definitely set. If Section A is interpreted to include also such statements of a confessional nature which are not an explanation of the Lutheran Confessions, thus going beyond the scope of the historic Symbols, then a new direction will have been taken by Synod. This, however, cannot be determined until Section A has been clearly defined by the Synod.

Section C

Section C is undoubtedly the best feature of Resolution 9 and may be an aid to determining whether Resolu-

³⁸ *Proceedings*, 1938, p. 346.

³⁹ *Proceedings*, 1959, p. 189. Cp. also p. 90.

tion 9 is constitutional even when interpreted in its broadest form.

Section C allows those who believe "that such statements are not satisfactory in part or in their entirety to present their concern to their brethren in the ministry." This makes it very clear that the doctrinal statements referred to in Section A are *not* on the level with the Lutheran Confessions. One of the first principles of the Lutheran Church is that the Lutheran Confessions are not to be accepted either *quatenus* or with mental reservation. For a Lutheran pastor the Symbols are not open to question. He subscribes to them *quia*, that is, he acknowledges that they are in accord with Scripture. The very fact that the *Brief Statement*, the *Common Confession*, and the scores of other confessional statements may be discussed, and if necessary altered, clearly subordinates them to the Symbols.

The second important aspect of Section C is that it both permits and encourages discussion when properly followed. Such a permissive resolution is very similar to the stand which the Synod took in 1938 in reference to the question whether women may vote in the congregation. Although the Synod stated that the accepted position and practice was not to permit women to vote in the Christian congregation, it nevertheless resolved "that this hitherto accepted position and practice of Synod be restudied in the light of Scripture in our congregations, our pastoral conferences, and our District conventions."⁴⁰

Due to the theological climate in Synod such open and frank discussion has not been encouraged. For instance, the prestige which the *Brief Statement* was beginning to enjoy had a tendency to place everyone under suspicion who in any way expressed some dissatisfaction with any part of the *Brief Statement*. In 1941 some misgivings concerning the *Brief Statement* had actually been permitted and adopted by the Synod. When the committee called for one document in its endeavor to bring about unity with the American Lutheran Church, it stated

we do not mean to dispense with any doctrinal statement made in our *Brief Statement* — for we believe that it correctly expresses the doctrinal position of our Synod — but we concede that for the sake of clarification under the present circumstances, some statements may need to be more sharply defined or amplified.⁴¹

This report was adopted by the Synod.⁴² By 1956 the door to discussion appeared to some to have been all but closed when the Synod resolved "that we reject any and every interpretation of documents approved by Synod which would be in disagreement with the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the *Brief Statement*." Here the *Brief Statement* was linked together with the Lutheran Confessions and was judged as a norm in regard to specific doctrines enumerated in the second "whereas": "election, objective justification, conversion, and the inspiration of the Scriptures."⁴³

⁴¹ *Proceedings*, 1941, p. 302.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁴³ *Proceedings*, 1956, p. 546.

⁴⁰ *Proceedings*, 1938, p. 346.

Such a tendency to elevate the *Brief Statement* has now been halted, at least temporarily. It has been clearly stated that it is discussable, an action which may not be permitted for the Confessions. Not only is discussion permitted, but the procedure to be followed is clearly outlined.

Perhaps it should be stated that there are some who have interpreted Section C to mean that if anyone finds any of the confessional statements adopted by the Synod unsatisfactory, then he is to present his concerns to the brethren in the ministry with a view of being corrected. That is to say, Section C merely permits discussion that will give the concerned brother the opportunity to be corrected and it does not imply that the doctrinal statement itself may be altered. Such an interpretation of Section C would in effect appear to make *all* doctrinal statements, not only the *Brief Statement* and the *Common Confession*, unalterable and elevate them to the *quia* level of the Confessions. With that the Synod would really be facing a series of constitutional, historical, and moral problems.

While it must be conceded that such a strange interpretation is possible from the letter of Resolution 9, frequent public statements by several members of the Committee on Doctrinal Matters and the President of the Synod make it very clear that this was not the intention of the resolution.

The Need for Clarification

Just what the Synod will do to clarify the scope of Resolution 9 remains to be seen. As Section A now reads it places *all* the doctrinal statements of a

confessional nature adopted by the Synod, the full scope of which is not known as yet, upon the conscience of the pastors, teachers, and professors of the Synod, that they do not teach contrary to them. It further assumes that unless evidence can be brought to the contrary, all of these statements adequately and properly set forth the doctrine of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions for present-day circumstances and that they need not be more sharply defined or amplified. It places what Theodore Graebner once called the "burden of infallibility" upon all of us.⁴⁴ If it were not for Section C this would be most awkward, since we know from history that some of our past positions had to be modified. For example Sihler in 1855, together with many Missouri pastors, used the language of Gerhard in speaking of *intuitu fidei* in connection with the doctrine of election. Gerhard used this type of language because his antitheses were in Calvinistic terms. When on the American scene the antitheses changed, the language had to be clarified. Thus, after 1880 when Missouri clashed with Ohio at Chicago this expression was no longer proper. Therefore Sihler in 1881 corrected his former language and freely admitted that his original doctrinal statements, as they had appeared in *Lehre und Wehre*, could no longer be maintained.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Theodore Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility: A Study in the History of Dogma," November 1948.

⁴⁵ F. Pieper, *Zur Einigung der amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1913, pp. 89 f.

Perhaps it is important further to remember what Walther said in connection with his invitation for free conferences,

We do not hereby mean to indicate that we are among those who believe that their understanding requires no development or correction. It is rather our constant, serious endeavor to make progress in the recognition of truth and, with the help of God, to free ourselves more and more from the errors which still cling to us.⁴⁶

In line with such an endeavor, Walther's article, "*Sententiam teneat, linguam corrigat*" of 1881, cited several theses and quotations which he had previously set forth at District conventions and on other occasions. He pointed out that these statements could easily be misunderstood if they were not clarified and were left to stand without further explanation.⁴⁷ Similarly F. Pieper raised the matter of confessing mistakes on the part of pastors and professors. Referring to his book, *Zur Einigung*, he said, "in those chapters [13 and 14] I confess on a number of pages that also in the Missouri Synod we have not in every respect and in every place spoken correctly on election and conversion."⁴⁸

In considering the implications of Resolution 9 the warning of Walther may still be in place:

People thought that after withdrawing from the left there was no possibility in erring in the other direction. Thus it

has come to pass that no one has departed farther from true Lutheranism than those who want to be the strictest Lutherans. They did not consider that also the way of truly pure doctrine is everywhere a narrow way, on which only he remains who with holy earnestness is intent on turning neither to the right nor to the left. It was assumed that the praise of being strictly orthodox was easy to obtain; that it required no earnest study, searching deliberation, prayer, struggle, and the conquering of many temptations; every unconverted man had only to attack every apparent heretic and everything which had the appearance of being ecclesiastical laxity with utmost ferocity [*baerbeissig*]; and to press and urge everything which had the appearance of being churchly, then the deed was accomplished, the prize orthodoxy won, the Great Inquisitor had established himself, and all now had to fear his citation to judgment. Thus it has come to the stage that no teacher stands more in the way of the so-called "strict churchly Lutherans" than — Luther.⁴⁹

In summary we suggest that what The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod needs to do today is to drive herself more and more into a study of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. By such study she will attempt to answer questions which are raised in our day on the basis of the Lutheran norms rather than to attempt to make the answers to yesterday's questions fit the questions of today.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Der Lutheraner*, XIII, 1. Translation from E. Lueker's article cited above in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XV, 537.

⁴⁷ *Lehre und Wehre*, XXVII, 43—54.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, LX, 99.

⁴⁹ *Der Lutheraner*, XIII, 58. Translation from E. Lueker, p. 537 f.

⁵⁰ Preface to the Book of Concord. "We likewise purpose to co-operate with one another in the future in the implementation of this effort at concord in our lands, according

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between a subscription to a confessional statement and the acceptance of such a statement?
2. Is there any other way of maintaining doctrinal discipline within a church body than the prayerful study of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions?
3. Which section, if any, of the *Brief Statement* needs to be revised, amplified, or sharpened for our day?

**Statement on San Francisco
Resolution No. 9**
**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT FOLLOWING
DR. REPP'S PRESENTATION**

The vice-presidents and I have given some thought and study to this par-

to our own and each community's circumstances, through diligent visitation of churches and schools, the supervision of printers, and other salutary means. If the current controversies about our Christian religion should continue or new ones arise, we shall see to it that they are settled and composed in timely fashion before they become dangerously widespread in order that all kinds of scandal might be obviated." P. 14.

ticular essay of Dr. Repp, "Confessions and Doctrinal Statements." We have, after reading again Resolution 9 of the San Francisco Convention, come to the conclusion that the essayist is correct in pointing up a weakness in that resolution. The weakness consists in this, that the resolution does not specify which of the doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod, as being in accord with Holy Writ, are meant. After consulting one or the other of the men who served on Committee 3 at the San Francisco Convention, we came to the conclusion that the committee never intended all resolutions of Synod in the past referring to matters of doctrine or practice to be regarded or classified as *publica doctrina*, but that it had reference rather to specific statements, such as the *Brief Statement*, the *Common Confession*, Part 1 and 2, and the *Statement on Scripture* which was adopted at the San Francisco Convention. The vice-presidents and I are agreed that the resolution ought to state definitely what doctrinal statements are meant. And we plan to memorialize the next convention to give a clear-cut definition as to which doctrinal statements are meant.

J. W. BEHNKEN

The Situation Regarding Lodges in American Lutheranism

By PAUL M. BRETSCHER

I should like to introduce the subject with a quotation from Holy Scripture. It is recorded for us by St. Paul in Philippians 1:27-30. Paul is in prison, and from prison he is writing this beautiful, consoling, and joyful and at the same time instructive and encouraging letter to his dear friends in Philippi. The quotation reads:

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine."

Paul is contending here for the Gospel. He uses the term Gospel in this epistle almost a dozen times, and he is telling his readers that they should stand firm in one spirit and with one mind strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel. Then he indicates that this involves difficulties, but he says: "Do not be frightened by your opponents, for that is an omen to them of their destruction but of your salvation, and that from God." Now, dear brethren,

with that statement from Holy Scripture before us I should like to introduce the subject and speak to you on a question which is a troublesome question in our church, has always been a troublesome question, and will no doubt continue to be a troublesome question in our church: the question regarding lodges.

May I first detail to you somewhat what the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America is and will be in these next years. All of you will have heard that two large Lutheran mergers are being formed. One is the Lutheran Church in America, and the other is The American Lutheran Church. You and I are concerned about what position these two merging groups are taking with respect to fraternal organizations, or lodges. Therefore I will want to say a few words about the Lutheran Church in America, which at this time is being consolidated.

The churches which will very shortly be known as the Lutheran Church in America are the following: the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, with about 23,000 members; the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, with almost 600,000; the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, known as the Suomi Synod, with some 36,000; and the United Lutheran Church in America, with almost 2,500,000.

Negotiations toward a merger of all

Lutheran churches in our country were begun in 1955, when a special commission on relations to American Lutheran church bodies, appointed by the ULCA, and a similar commission, appointed by the Augustana Synod, sent letters of invitation over the signatures of the presidents of these two synods to fourteen Lutheran Church bodies, including also the synods comprising the Synodical Conference. Two of the invited bodies replied affirmatively and accepted the invitation "to participate in merger discussions looking toward organic union." These were the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod).

On December 12, 1956, 46 commissioners representing these four Lutheran groups (ULCA, Suomi Synod, Augustana, American Evangelical Lutheran) met in Chicago to begin negotiations. At this meeting the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity, known since that time as JCLU, was formed.

This joint commission met a number of times and adopted resolutions pertaining to doctrine, nomenclature, geographical boundaries of synods, congregations, ministers, conventions, boards, agencies, auxiliaries, organizational matters, and calendar of developments.

From Section 10 we quote the following: "On the basis of decisions already made and those to be made by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity, the intention is that the Constitution and Bylaws, and/or standing resolutions of the merged church are to be drafted and submitted for action

by the 1960 conventions of the participating bodies."

From Section 5, which deals with the office of the ministry, I quote the following paragraph relating to lodge affiliation: "If the church shall be free to advise and admonish concerning association and affiliation with organizations which claim to possess in their teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to His church, its ministry must not be compromised by pastors who belong to such organizations. Provisions shall be made in the constitution of the church whereby ministers ordained by the new church shall agree to refrain from membership in such organizations or be subject to discipline."

This resolution was the result of a lengthy debate in the meetings held by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity. Reports on that debate were recorded very frankly in *The Lutheran* (October, November, and December issues of 1958). The resolution resulted in even more discussion when it was submitted to the respective commissions of the four Lutheran bodies negotiating toward the merger.

It might be remembered that the substance of this proposed resolution by the JCLU agrees with the position on lodges held for years by the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church and by the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. Both churches take the position that *pastors* may not affiliate with fraternal organizations, but they do not, so it appears, object to lay members of congregations joining such organizations. From this position the represent-

atives of Augustana and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church refused to budge, so that it seemed for a time in the discussions of the JCLU that further negotiations toward the merger would be completely stymied. For this reason — so we gather from the proceedings — the ULCA members of the JCLU were at last ready to yield.

I should like to quote from these discussions a statement made by Dr. Henry H. Bagger, president of the ULCA seminary in Philadelphia, which will give you an insight into the nature of the debate. Dr. Bagger made a statement as a delegate rather than as a commissioner (though he was a commissioner), setting forth his reaction to the section of the report that deals with secret societies. He told of the strenuous struggles in conscience which he and some other JCLU commissioners had gone through as this issue was debated. He made it clear that in his own life he had never affiliated with such an organization, not even with a college fraternity, but that he was strongly inclined to accept the decision of the JCLU in spite of the fact that the report (1) "violated evangelical freedom." He said: "I want such freedom for myself, and I want to help guarantee it to others." (2) The report "establishes a double standard for the laity and for the clergy." (3) "The report takes what seems to me to lie in the area of pastoral counseling on the part of the church with its ministers and puts it over into the field of discipline." (4) "I am forced by this to make a judgment where I am ignorant both in terms of outright knowledge and in

terms of experience." (5) "It makes me discount the sincerity and the judgment and the theological acumen and correctness of some of my brethren who, having been members of lodges or being members of lodges, have not found that it has violated their Christian conscience."

After weighing the above reasons for being out of sympathy with the JCLU decision, Dr. Bagger said he had to ask himself repeatedly whether he was willing to see the whole merger proposal fall to the ground as the result of an unyielding attitude, especially on the part of ULCA people on these points. In the face of that alternative, so he says, he finally concluded that "it was up to us [that is, the members of the ULCA commission] to pay the price of yielding, believing that this is a matter of conscience with our brethren in Augustana and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church with whom we are negotiating. It was clear," so he said, "to your commissioners that here was an issue that had to be met. We made the choice, and the result of our choice is before our church — the report." This was in 1958, when the report of the JCLU was submitted to the Dayton convention of the ULCA.

I should like to read to you also a statement from President Fry's report on the state of the church. This report came out in August 1958 and was directed to the 1958 convention of the ULCA. May I read to you the following brief section:

"From the very first day of the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity it was

visible to everybody that the issue of lodge membership for ministers was going to be the steepest obstacle on the road to merger, the thorniest point that would have to be handled. No good would come from acting as if it were not there, much as we might feel a subconscious urge to do so. There was no hope that, if only we would keep our eyes away from it, it would be overlooked or disappear. Our brethren from the other bodies had strong and, it is right to say, vehement convictions about it, and thousands in the constituencies behind them were even more adamant, in insisting on what they would regard as an acceptable solution."

Dr. Fry then developed at length the debate carried on in the JCLU regarding proposed lodge paragraphs. After considerable debate, he reported, when the ULCA commissioners saw that the other members of the Joint Commission would not relent, the ULCA commissioners had a private consultation and adopted the following statement, came back into the assembly, and submitted it. The statement reads:

"As a concession in love to the living tradition of our sister churches the commissioners of the United Lutheran Church in America acquiesce [note that term "acquiesce," look it up in the dictionary, find out what it means] unanimously in the vote just taken" namely, the commission's proposal in its report.

In his report to the ULCA convention in Dayton in 1958, Dr. Fry stated explicitly what the adoption of the resolution quoted above (see page 114) did not imply. He said:

"1) The proposed regulation does not apply to lay people — to any lay people — and will not be extended to do so.

"2) It has to do only with men entering its ministry, by ordination or otherwise, after the new church is formed. In conformity with the general rule set forth on an earlier page, which will have no exceptions, ministers who are now members of lodges or other secret societies on the date of the merging convention [here is a tacit admission that they have such members] will not be affected by this enactment. [In other words, those pastors who are in at the present time, up to the merger, will not be told to get out.] They will be subject to no discrimination or disabilities. Their future relations with such organizations will be scrupulously left to their own volition and consciences exactly as they have been in the past.

"3) No specific order or organization will be named in this connection by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity or by anybody else prior to the merger.

"4) It is understood and expected that this statement will be dealt with in good faith after the new church comes into existence."

In the Agreement of Consolidation, known as the *Agreement of Consolidation Including Constitution and By-Laws, Lutheran Church in America*, we read the following in Section 4, Article 7, the section pertaining to ministers:

"After the organization of the Lutheran Church in America no person

who belongs to any organization which claims to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to His church shall be ordained or otherwise received into the ministry of this church, nor shall any person so ordained or received by this church be retained in its ministry if he subsequently joins such an organization." This is the paragraph in the Constitution and By-Laws of the new Lutheran Church in America which will prescribe its policy on lodges. You will note that this paragraph takes over from the Augustana position and the position of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church their attitude regarding membership in secret organizations: pastors may not join them, but nothing is said about laymen.

Dr. Reinartz, secretary of the ULCA, writes me: "I regret that I have no documents which set forth any debate on this issue on lodges in the other three church bodies with which the ULCA intends merging. All that I can confidently affirm is, that Article 7, Section 4 [the one that I read] has now been rather fully approved by the non-ULCA merger bodies, and it is likely that ULCA will approve it at its October 13-20, 1960, biennial convention in Atlantic City." What's the upshot of all this?

The paragraph on membership in lodges does not forbid laymen to hold membership in fraternal societies. Secondly, it does, however, forbid candidates for the ministry graduating from any of the seminaries or received into the new church in some other way to become affiliated with a fraternal or-

ganization. Thirdly, it does not compel pastors who had joined some fraternal societies before consummation of the merger to discontinue their membership in such a society.

I would like to make a few additional comments on the basis of a very careful critique by Dr. Paul Peters in the *Theological Quarterly* of the Wisconsin Synod, in the January 1959 issue. Dr. Peters takes up the statements made by Dr. Bagger.

Dr. Bagger had said: The proposal regarding lodges "violates evangelical freedom." Dr. Peters comments: "To say that this proposal regarding lodges 'violates evangelical freedom' would be true if evangelical freedom were to be equated with 'something every man must decide for himself' or with 'the right of the individual to exercise his own judgment.'"

Dr. Peters goes on to say: "While our Augsburg Confession (Article XVIII) declares that 'it is necessary that the doctrine of Christian liberty be preserved in the churches,' it also asserts that 'it is necessary that the chief article of the Gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men.' It is just this chief article of the Gospel which is not being preserved by advocating an evangelical freedom for those who seek membership in lodges which by their own teaching deny that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ."

You may remember that Dr. Bagger also said that this proposal would create a double standard. To this Dr. Peters remarks: "To say that the

proposal regarding lodges 'establishes a double standard' is only too true and cannot be improved on."

Dr. Bagger had also referred to pastoral counseling and to discipline. Dr. Peters writes: "To separate between 'pastoral counseling' as applying to ministers and 'discipline' as applied to — whom? [Dr. Bagger didn't say] to — laymen? is not only dangerously near to establishing a double standard, but is also creating a distinction which finally does away with discipline in the churches and makes pastoral counseling an aimless and goalless practice."

To the statement by Dr. Bagger: "We know nothing about lodges," Dr. Peters replies: "To confess to be 'ignorant both in terms of outright knowledge and in terms of experience' of the teaching and practice of lodges and therefore to refrain from making a judgment, is ignoring the fact that we examine the lodges and their so-called secrets by the Bible and that we judge them in the light of God's Word."

"Such judging is not a judging of the heart. Consequently it is beside the point to say that making a judgment 'makes me discount the sincerity . . . of some of my brethren' who have not found that the lodges violate their Christian conscience. It is not discounting their sincerity when I am called upon to judge 'the judgment and the theological acumen and correctness of some of my brethren' if these are contrary to the Word."

Finally Dr. Peters reminds us of the fallacy that when the commissioners of the ULCA unanimously acquiesced in a vote taken in favor of the proposal

with which they do not at all agree, they were not giving their assent to any doctrine or doctrinal practice but only to an "opinion." "No commitment," Dr. Fry said, "to any theological basis for the decision was either asked for or given." "Therefore," continues Dr. Peters, "the ULCA commissioners could both yield to the majority vote and still dissent from the proposal when it was up for discussion."

Thus the steepest obstacle on the road to the four-way merger was not removed — it was by-passed by means of a compromise for the sake of a proposed merger which was more precious to the members of the new church than the doctrine and practice involved in the lodge question and in lodge membership.

What is happening in The American Lutheran Church (TALC), which is also being formed?

The following information I owe to one of the members of the constitution committee, Professor Walter G. Tillmans, Waverly, Iowa. The quotation is from the report and actions of the constituting convention of The American Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn., April 22–24, 1960, pages 115, 116:

Articles of Union, Article I, "Confession of Faith," Section 5: "We affirm the unity in matters of faith and life which was manifested in the Minneapolis Theses of 1930, including excerpts from the Chicago Theses of 1920 and The United Testimony on Faith and Life of 1952, which are hereby made a part of these articles of union and are appended to them."

Then he quotes from the Minneapolis Theses with regard to the lodge question: "1. These synods agree that all such organizations or societies, secret or open, as are either avowedly religious or practice the forms of religion without confessing as a matter of principle the Triune God and Jesus Christ as the Son of God, come into the flesh and our Savior from sin, or teach instead of the Gospel, salvation by human works or morality, are antichristian and destructive of the best interests of the church and the individual soul and that therefore the Church of Christ and its congregations can have no fellowship with them.

"2. They agree that a Lutheran synod should not tolerate pastors who have affiliated themselves with any antichristian society. And they admonish their pastors and congregations to testify against the sin of lodgery and to put forth earnest efforts publicly and privately to enlighten and persuade persons who are members of antichristian societies to sever their connection with such organizations."

What is the position of our Synod regarding lodges? But before pointing up specifically our own position, I should just like to make a few statements regarding other approaches to the problem.

In the May issue of *Church Management* there is an article with the title "The Minister and Fraternal Orders. Is the World Your Parish?" The author takes the position [he is a Methodist] that the minister should recognize the problem, but he thinks the best thing he can do is to join the organization.

He writes: "I have found my time spent in a Masonic Order profitable indeed. A minister is able to do his part in keeping the things of God before the lodge. He is able to impress the need for persons to practice outside the lodge the lessons they learn within."

The Dutch Reformed Church, with headquarters in Michigan, gets out a monthly journal which takes the position that the church must oppose the Masonic Lodge. But a writer for this journal argues: "I have no argument to support the idea that membership in the church and in the Masonic Lodge is compatible, but if a Mason worth our instrumentality were brought to conversion and faith in Christ, nonmembership in the Masonic Order should not be made a condition for membership. Such a thing is a matter of discipline and also, if necessary, a matter for discipline in due time for the new convert, that is, after he has had ample time to rid himself with the help and prayers of the church of the idea, one which is so widely accepted by so many Christians that we can hardly expect him to see our point of view immediately." In other words, he proposes that the Dutch Reformed Church should take in lodge members and work with them afterward.

What is the position of our own church? I do not have to say too much about this, but I must say something. The Missouri Synod, as you know, has stated its policy very clearly and unequivocally in the *Synodical Handbook*. These paragraphs have been repeatedly reaffirmed by our conventions since 1929. They have also often been

brought to the floor of District conventions. It is difficult to improve on them. They recognize certain problem areas, and they give guidance as to how to proceed in these problem areas. But the fundamental policy of our church is stated with such clarity that there is no equivocation. This is a credit, gentlemen, to our fathers of 1926 and 1929, who formulated those resolutions. I need not read them to you.

I should like to read to you, however, a brief statement which I found almost accidentally in a document compiled by the late Dr. Graebner. Way back in 1932 the Milwaukee convention authorized him to make a compilation of all statements regarding lodges that had been made in Synodical conventions and had been reported in the proceedings and to make this material available. Dr. Graebner did this as best as he could under the circumstances. In examining this material [we have to go through it every now and then] I happened to note an extract from the Eastern District report of 1873. I cannot state the concern of our Synod toward secret orders better than the Eastern District reported it in 1873:

"Why do we oppose lodges? 1. Because they have a false deistic doctrine concerning God and pronounce their adherence to it. 2. Because all their prescribed prayers are directed to this deistic God, and they know nothing of Christ's merit and mediatorship. 3. Because they teach the pagan heresy of the freedom of the will regarding the fall of man and the meritorious character of good works and thereby desire to earn divine favor and eternal salva-

tion. 4. Because they disgracefully abuse Holy Scripture by lowering it to a symbol of human truthfulness and a code of moral law."

Now I would like to quote to you just a few lines from a man whom you all respect, who has been one of the great leaders in our church, together with Dr. Graebner, in these last forty years, to help us appreciate the problem of lodges and also to help us proceed in a God-pleasing way to solve the problem. I refer to Mr. Ben Holt, who was at the San Francisco convention last year and also addressed the delegates. In one of his most recent studies he comes to the conclusion that when Masons tell us that Masonry is becoming less religious, this is a lie. Masonry is becoming more and more religious, and he demonstrates it. In his article he refers to some 20 modern writers, all Masons. It is clear from these writers that there is a movement in Masonry to make Masonry more religious, to make it the dominant religion of Protestantism in the U. S. I want to read you just one quote:

"Masonry is essentially religious. Every step we take when we join the lodge, from the time we enter, repeat the lectures, kneel before the junior warden, the senior warden and finally at the altar before the worshipful master are religious from the beginning to the end. There is more memory work and more catechization in the Blue Lodge ritual than there is in the Lutheran small catechism. It's cardinal doctrines are morality, God, immortality."

I should also like to quote from an-

other study that Mr. Holt recently made. He examined a Masonic hymnbook. His concern was what they do with Jesus Christ in a Masonic hymnal. He discusses the hymns which we also have in our hymnbook. He writes:

"Let's take Masonic hymn No. 12, 'Now the Day Is Over.' When we sing it we say, 'Jesus, give the weary Calm and sweet repose.' Masonry says, 'Father, give the weary Calm and sweet repose.' No, Masonry must never, never use the name of Jesus in the sense that we as Christians do, never as the one who shed His blood for us and redeemed us, and they must never refer to the cross in this manner as we Christians do. . . . Or take the Masonic hymn 'Blest Be the Tie That Binds.' When we sing this, we say, 'Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in *Christian* love.' Masonry says, 'Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in *purest* love.' Masonry thus not only substitutes the word 'purest' for 'Christian,' but subsequently also utterly repudiates Christ by omitting and deleting these precious words, 'Yet one in Christ and one in heart we hope to meet again.'"

I should like also to pay tribute here to our Australian brethren, one of whom we have with us, Dr. Blaess from our seminary in Australia. Dr. Blaess has a son, pastor, who has done a wonderful piece of work, together with other members of a joint committee, to study the lodge situation in Australia. This committee has sent us their reports on a number of lodges. I would like to read to you some of their final paragraphs on Masonry:

"While it may be possible for a Chris-

tian to be or remain in such an organization because he does not realize that the two associations are contradictory, we believe that (1) we cannot in truth worship the true God, the Triune God, with those who by implication deny Him, when they worship God under the general concept of the Great Architect of the Universe, Jehovah, Jabulon, Allah, or any other pagan conceptions of the deity.

"(2) We cannot in truth acclaim a God-given Savior, the second person of the Trinity, who alone has redeemed us to God and by whom alone man can come to peace with God, and then join in worship with those who by implication deny or refuse to acknowledge the Savior.

"(3) We cannot in truth be members of the Christian church, in which we have complete redemption, the full revelation of God's will, and a perfect and completely adequate guide for life and hope for eternal life and then seek membership in a secondary religious organization which has not and cannot have both the high ideals of Christianity and the divinely attested authority of the same.

"(4) A Christian who has the perfect, complete, and absolute religion should not and cannot therefore enter into any association or fraternity in which he is obliged to keep silent as to his distinctive beliefs for the sake of the welfare of an organization of secondary importance."

Just a few additional notes on the activities of the Synodical Commission. The correspondence we have been hav-

ing with pastors has for a number of years revolved primarily around the following organizations: Freemasonry, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Independent Order of Foresters, the National Grange, and the P. E. O. Sisterhood. There are, all told, about twenty fraternal organizations which are particularly troublesome to our pastors.

Our efforts to do something with regard to the Elks, the Moose, and the Eagles have in no sense ceased. We have a situation right now on which I should like to report. One of our own pastors, together with two of his laymen, has completely revised the current Moose ritual and has successfully removed the objectional religious features. We are looking forward to a meeting sometime this fall in Mooseheart with the chief officials of the Moose, together with this pastor and his two lay members.

We have also again heard from the Fraternal Order of Eagles. I should like to say that the Fraternal Order of Eagles understands the resolution which was adopted by the College of Presidents in February 1959. They are again, however, making efforts in another way to try to find a way which would make it possible for members of our church to become affiliated with the Eagles without compromising their conscience and without violating the Constitution and Bylaws of the Eagles. In our task I should like to have you

always remember Paul in prison. Here is a man who had met similar problems. He had to meet gnosticism — and all modern lodges are really a form of gnosticism. He had to meet them on their own ground. Yet Paul, even in prison, continued to be concerned about these two things: to strive for the Gospel and to encourage the Philipians to stand side by side, striving for the purity of the Gospel, always remembering that the opponents are under the judgment of God.

Our Commission stands ready to serve as best we know how. If we do not get around to answering your letters within 24, at the highest 48 hours, you will understand the situation. We try to take care of them, however, as fast as possible.

One other note: The Knights of Columbus oath is again making the rounds. This oath is, from our point of view, a fake oath, a bogus oath.

And now, finally, I call attention to the keynote address by Dr. Behnken this past Wednesday, in which he tried to bring to our attention what from his point of view has been going on in the Missouri Synod these past twenty-five years. As I commend him to your prayers and all that he said, I should like to have you underscore, as I have underscored, what he said with regard to the problem of lodges. But let us go back one step farther and think of Paul as in prison now, telling all of us to strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Motivation for the 1961 Budget

By WILLIAM A. BUEGE

My assignment is somewhat simplified by my being able to tell you that we are not going to try to have the various District representatives recalcus in order that they might be able to raise these figures somewhat higher than they are now. What we shall attempt to do, by the instructions of the budget committee, will be to take a look at what we have done, primarily in the light of God's Word as it has been given to us.

One of the first questions that we find God asking man, He asked of our mother Eve: "What is this that thou hast done?" What is this that we have done here? As someone will say, "That's not a relevant test. After all, our parents had fallen into sin, the terrible sin of wanting to be like God. For this reason we should take a different question, certainly a different circumstance, in order to make this somewhat applicable."

But should we? Isn't the particular temptation, especially for people like us, "Ye shall be as God"? We who have been engaged in God's work, we can easily identify our own effort with God's effort. We who have actually done something for God, wasn't God here the same as He was in the Garden? Didn't we pray? And if we prayed in Jesus' name — as we did — weren't our prayers heard? Didn't God speak to us as a man with his friend, even as He did with Adam so long ago? Unless we don't believe any more that

God still speaks to us through His holy Word. So God did speak; God gave us directives; God gave us inspiration; God gave us His Holy Spirit. And a large measure of the outcome is represented here.

But we still now must ask, "What is this that thou hast done?" Otherwise we will not be people who are repentant before God, and we will no longer be people who live solely and only by grace. We will already have taken that initial step whereby we are on some sort of plateau and therefore that much closer to God than people who need His complete grace.

What have we done? San Francisco told us that we ought to develop a work program that would mean something in excess of \$24,000,000. What have we done? We have said: "No. We cannot at this time develop that kind of program. We are not saying that we won't do the *work*; we are saying that we are *postponing* a part of it." Why? This is something you must evaluate for yourselves.

What have we done? The various elective boards, the so-called spending agencies of ours, came in with another program, and we said no to this one. The Board of Directors came in with a program, and thank God, we said no to this, because we said more ought to be done than the Board of Directors felt ought to be done. And then we ourselves are going to say: "This will be the program represented by

\$21,000,000 plus," or whatever we vote upon later on. Are we going to continue now to say no and end up by saying no even to our own selves. This becomes one of our very real problems.

Now I am to stand here and evaluate what our task really is. When I tried to think through what I was supposed to do up here, I had a great deal of difficulty. Am I to try to show you men the inadequacy of our commitment over against the work program? There isn't one of you that couldn't tell me this better than I can tell you. Am I supposed to attempt to stir everybody up now so that we will say: "We will do more than this. You can write down higher figures"? It would be so simple to speak an easy yes or an easy no to this. The only yes that will ever be possible for men like us, who have been called by our Lord Jesus Christ at a time like this to do His work, will be a much more difficult, because much more involved, yes; much more difficult because it is going to mean actually that our Lord will have us at His disposal for these purposes; much more involved because it is going to be incumbent upon us to take even the abuses of our brethren back home — and there are those in this day — take even their abuses in order that we might be able to stand up in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and say what we sincerely believe ought to be done. Yet we shouldn't be so frightened of some of *you*. It seems to me that St. Paul could already tell us a great deal about that.

Now, where do we begin if we want to get involved, really involved, in this very difficult yes? We tried to figure

out different ways by which something could be done. I thought: "Suppose that each one of us present were to dedicate himself to raising an extra \$1,000 — each one of us — there would be \$800,000!" Or suppose that we review the whole program once more and in essence start over. The weather is cooler — perhaps some of these things would take better. But then probably we don't go back far enough. Then we must go back the full 25, 35, 50 years of our own personal history in order that God might again have a better chance at us, that He might have a better chance through us. Or we could have a great, big prayer meeting — and let's not discount that possibility. Or we could page through our texts and find out which would be particularly pertinent. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet I don't believe we dare do any one of these.

I believe that in this area where we are now there are no gimmicks; there is only God — God's Word, God's work, and God speaking. This involves every last one of us. I believe that it borders on blasphemy if we attempt to use the Word of God for certain self-chosen purposes of our making. As noble as these purposes may be, represented in dollar signs, I believe that it actually *is* blasphemy if we attempt to turn God to our purposes and prescribe to Him the manner in which He must do His work in us and through us, because then He is no longer God. Perhaps this is where we constantly fail in this area: that we don't *let* God be God; that we don't let God have *His* full way with us, let the *results* be what they will.

And then you ask yourself again:

"Where do you begin?" Where do you begin with yourself, you who know all the answers already in advance? And you, even when you start thinking about something like this, are already thinking of certain goals and objectives — maybe 22, 23 million dollars. Where do you begin with brothers in the work, men who know the answers better than you do? Where do you begin with the so-called pros, the real professionals, the men who have to give us guidance, the men who have this particular problem with which I am faced now? Day by day, in trying to get this work done in the various congregations and Districts, where do you really begin?

I believe that we begin where we have been pointed to again and again. I had the great privilege of making a trip around the world, and one of the incidents of this entire trip that stands out in my mind beyond any other took place in Japan. We went to a place where we are able in a small way to help some poor ragged children, underprivileged children, so underprivileged that they are on the verge of becoming tubercular. So, after we had seen what was being done there and how the money was being used, the children all stood there in robes. And so the head man asked, "Would you like to have them sing for you?" I said, "Yes," They sang: "Jesus loves me, This I know, For the Bible tells me so."

Here is one of the deepest of all of the Lutheran theological emphases that we can make. They didn't say, "If we have enough to eat, God loves me"; they didn't say, "Because we have now

been taken into a shelter, therefore Jesus loves me; because we've got our parents back and we're getting our health back, because I've got a new Mercury and we've got two TV sets, this is why God loves me"; then of course the reverse means that He doesn't love me.

No, you start with this love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus loves me; this I know because God Himself tells me so. And then you take Romans, chapter 8, and you *are* persuaded that not even life or death or — name it — anything in hell or on earth or in heaven can separate you from that love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We believe that, otherwise, we are none of His. We *can* believe that. How could we sleep tonight if we couldn't believe it even when we come back to Him with the smell of the pigpen about us instead of the incense of praise? In fact — let's face it — we can still believe it even when we say no to that love — as we might through a budget, as we might by lack of dedication, as we might by failure to give a full response, because this is the everlasting love — no one and nothing can possibly change it, neither you nor I nor our sin nor the devil, because it is always there and it is always everything that we have learned to know it to be by that suffering and death on the cross, by the body and the blood given and shed for us for the remission of sin. But what we most certainly know is that whenever we do respond to God (and this is all that is possible — the impulse, the initiative is always from Him, and therefore all that we do is ever respond), the response is always to that love — to

that love of God in Christ Jesus. This, too, we must know because the Bible tells us so. It is because of this love of God in Christ Jesus that you and I are again — what Adam lost for us — restored to the image of God in Christ Jesus, even the express image, as the Epistle told us the other Sunday.

Helmut Thielicke developed the idea that the image of God is to be thought of in terms of the image God has of us. Then he uses this tremendous illustration of Cardinal Mindszenty because this great hero for God, the defender of the faith, this man who went through so much for the name of Jesus — then what did they do to him? Who was this man who made those responses? Was this Cardinal Mindszenty? No. Not even a caricature of the man. Then he adds: "But I do hope that he still has the comfort before he dies of knowing that the image that God had of him in his heart was the real Cardinal Mindszenty, the man who belonged to God in Christ Jesus."

Jesus loves me, this I know. He doesn't love only you and me; He loves many others. This is what we heard expressed again and again in terms of our being members of the body of Christ, members one to another, members who are therefore one person, that we edify one another.

This is especially brought home to us when we see these good brothers of ours who are doing the real work of the church today out there in the front lines, and the best that we can possibly do is be the quartermaster corps back home. We see some of these brothers of ours through whose

mouths and hands we are ministering 'way across the face of the earth, and your first reaction is one of personal shame. You see a young man that has one child and is going to have another. He has finally finished studying the language, and now he can go out. Where? Into a place where you and I wouldn't want to go, I am sure, not if we want to stay like we are back here. But here is a man thoroughly in love because here is a man who bubbles over with this energy of God, the very love of God shining through his face and in everything that he says about this high privilege that God gives him, to be able to sacrifice. But he would never use that word, so I felt ashamed of my own kind of participation in ministering to the body of Jesus Christ.

Are these men ever discouraged? They wouldn't be human if they wouldn't be discouraged. But when they are really discouraged, it is always with regard to you and to me back here. Their question always is, Do we really mean what we claim to say with our words? Do we really mean our praying the Lord's Prayer? Or do we only mean what comes up in such things as budgets, policies, refusals to become part of this body of Jesus Christ in such a telling way that these men know they can count on us — count on us in every way in which we said they could when we sent them? This is their discouragement. We are their discouragement.

What do they give, and what do we give? I believe this is especially brought home when you see these young wives of theirs with their little

children and in some of the most God-forsaken-looking places that you've ever seen in the world. And these young girls have been torn up out of environments such as you find here. And you see their babies scratching away at the prickly heat, and the powder won't stay on because the perspiration runs it off. And what do we do? We had two hot days at a conference, excepting that at night you could cool off — and we didn't have to stay.

I believe that the church is still the church under the cross. Luther said that an essential mark of the church is the cross. In terms of what it suffers, it may well be that these are the people who are suffering vicariously for us today, these new Christians of Japan and — name it — all over the Far East who still have to pay a price to confess Jesus Christ, who are ostracized from their families, their neighborhoods, and their jobs because they have taken the Gospel that you and I have sent over there. They must suffer vicariously for us, but they pray for us. And the prayer that they have for us is that we might still be "church" and not degenerate into an organization; that we might still be "church" and in this respect, as church, not become self-engrossed, not become so selfishly thinking of our own spirituality and our own cause that we forget the real purpose of our being.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" The first time that question was asked, it was asked out of the dust. The only place from which that question can still be asked today — out of the dust. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Luther once said God would make heroes of us all, not people who indulge in Christianity as though it were a hobby that can be taken care of with the left hand while we do everything of our own planning and self-choosing with our right hand. God would make heroes of us all. He's got heroes in our congregations. We see them every day, don't we? Now He would make heroes also of us. Heroes like some of those men out there, one who ought to come home but won't, because he knows he's got to die there. Heroes like another man who said, "You talk about policy. Policy doesn't make too much difference to us. This must go because we've given our lives here. I've spent 30 years on this." Then I ask myself, What have I to say? God would make heroes of us, even such heroes as — here, I believe, is one of the great conclusions of a sermon that I once read — such heroes that, even when I die, although I know I shall not die, someone should stumble across this skull of mine in the graveyard, I would still want that skull to preach but one message, the message of the risen Lord Jesus Christ: "I have no eyes now, but I see Him; I have no lips, but I kiss Him; I have no tongue, but I sing His praises with all of you who call upon His name. I'm a hard skull, but I have been made all soft and malleable under His love. All suffering is over now. This is what He accomplished when He took it all upon His shoulders and carried it off to Calvary."

The first day I was here the religion editor of our newspaper called me long distance and asked what was the one

thing that stood out in my mind about this Far East trip. There is one thing, and that is the deep, massive, untold numbers of people moving. And they're all on the move, it seems; it's almost like a bunch of worms in a can. And they're moving — up and down India — across Japan — name it — they're moving. They're all on the go. And you ask, "Where are they going?" Let's ask out of our religious faith, "Where are they going?" Let's remember also that there is One who is moving with them — unless we no longer believe that He has compassion on sheep who have no shepherd, unless we no longer believe "Whatsoever ye have done unto the least of these My

brothren, ye have done it unto Me." He's moving with them, and His question to us is: "Where are *you* going?"

Remember the legend that when Peter was to suffer death in Rome, he had a chance to escape. And while he was running away from Rome, he saw his Lord on His way back to Rome. And he asked: "*Quo vadis, Domine*, — whither goest Thou, Lord?" "*Iterum crucifigi* — to be crucified again." And Peter went back. And today we must ask: "*Quo vadis, hodie, Domine* — whither goest Thou today, Lord?" And we get the same answer, because somebody must sacrifice: "*Iterum crucifigi* — to be crucified again." Will we go back?

The 1960 Budget

By R. C. MUHLY

On Friday morning, just three days ago, Pastor Ora C. Riemer of Cross Plains, Ind., passed away. He was in attendance at this Counselors and Fiscal Conference. In this hour he is standing before the great white throne. His labors here below have culminated in a glorious conclusion.

We who are left behind have not completed our labors. That's why we were not called with him on Friday to enter into the rest of the Lord. We still have much work to do in the Lord's vineyard.

What a stupendous challenge is placed at our door! What a magnificent problem to tackle and solve! Raising \$19,772,887 this year. This means that during the last five months our Christians must contribute \$10,500,000 for Synod. Our congregations were polled late last fall. Here we learned that only \$18,000,000 can be expected this year. Their polling is an accurate measure of their giving. This indicates that Synod will be short \$1,750,000 this year. *What can we do to go all the way?*

We can go all the way if the congregations *reach* their goal for 1960 and if a good many of them far *exceed* their goals. How can we help congregations in the 110 days we still have left?

District presidents, you will be looking to your circuit counselors for action in our congregations. You are officers of District and Synod. Two hundred and twenty of our circuit counselors have been newly elected to their office.

We have many new District presidents and vice-presidents attending this conference. The District *Praesidium* and circuit counselors of Synod are line officers of both District and Synod, they are key leaders. They are responsible before the church and the Lord of the church.

May I plead with members of the District *Praesidium* and circuit counselors that you first set your own house in order, that your own congregations reach *and exceed* their goals for 1960. May we plead with you that you then, together with your District and circuit stewardship leaders, go all the way in the matter of reaching the *local pastor*. Sit down with your brethren, tell them the Valparaiso story. It is a good story, the story of the work and the Word of the Lord. Sell the pastors on going all out this fall. The local pastor is a vital link in this chain. We must bring him into the full work that all of us are doing together.

Through the pastor reach the lay leaders, the voting body, the church council, in these congregations where help is needed to make and exceed the goals for District and Synod this fall. Remember, "what Christ wants we cannot afford to keep!" It has been said, "No one ever returns from Calvary out of debt." So, Mr. Circuit Counselor, you are one of the shock troops of the Kingdom. Five hundred of you dedicated and determined leaders can take us all the way to the goal of \$19,772,887 in 1960.

When you get home, gather your brethren around you, and discuss this matter. Rally each pastor to this cause. One by one sell your men on this important task.

District presidents and District stewardship leaders, make your *District fiscal conferences* and your *District leaders' conferences* the best you have ever had. Inform your brethren. Inspire them. Over 1,000 pastors and 3,000 lay delegates will attend the fiscal conferences of our Districts this fall. Take them under the Cross, motivate them in Jesus and the cleansing blood, build a fire in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Give this to them straight from the heart, "Thus saith the Lord!" "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations," the Lord Jesus said to His people of all time. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." When the Lord of the church has spoken, we as His people have no choice. Let us therefore say to our brethren throughout Synod, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Brethren, you have attended this Fiscal Conference at Valparaiso. Take the floor at your District fiscal conferences. Share your deep convictions. Lay it upon the hearts of your people that it costs money, a lot of money, to finance a *conquest*. That's the job Jesus gave us to do, win the world for Him. He has also given us the money to do it. Have we therefore any excuse whatever? No, we do not. Let us therefore have courage, let us speak out for Jesus. If the heart is really full, let it spill over. Sell this program of

a marching church to your people throughout Synod!

And remember your *fall circuit meetings*! Brethren, plan your meeting well. Put Jesus into the middle of it. Make it count. Get your people to attend. Don't let it become a dry meeting stifled with statistics and long budgetary columns, but make it to live and to breathe. Draw your people into the closer family of Jesus. Send them on their way with hearts atingle. You see, Jesus will be there. He will take each of these pastors and laymen by the hand, saying to them, "Go and build My church." Mr. Counselor, will you do this? Will you take them under the Cross of Jesus and motivate them in that wonderful miracle of love, a love higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest sea, a love which took Him all the way to the cross and to the tomb? Will you be that kind of a leader among your brethren?

Being a leader and a builder and a worker requires consecrated effort on your part. "Get the work done, then the blessing will come!" It was Sheldon who said: "No statue was ever erected to the man who thought it best to leave well enough alone." Let's get the work done!

Follow up your circuit meeting with a personal visit in *lagging congregations*. These are congregations where the goal is too low, or where the remittance pattern is not as it should be. We simply cannot afford to shrug our shoulders and say, "Why don't they do better?" We must counsel with these brethren. We must win them over to

go all the way. Remember, "the love of Christ constraineth us," it tugs at us, it will not let us go. This is so very important. Let's go all the way!

Remember the *Mission Education* program. This 12-semester plan is now beginning. The first semester gets under way this fall. Will you encourage mission education among the pastors and congregations of your area? Pastor Soeldner, who is in charge of mission education, has done very fine work. We wish to salute him in this regard. Our people do not know the full story of a marching church. They have a small knowledge of it, but they are not yet thoroughly familiar with it. Once they become interested and know the story, their participation will be better too.

Then there is the season of *Reformation*, coming so close to Nov. 6, *Synodical Sunday*. Here we consider the blessings that are ours because of the Reformation four centuries ago. Brethren, if ours is to be a continuing reformation, then let's share the Gospel of the Reformation. Let's send it out to the ends of the earth. The October Reformation service in our congregations might well be a day for rallying to the cause of missions. Through sermon and song, through our prayers and our special Reformation offering for missions, let us make this a high festival of the church.

To help you, the *Lutheran Witness* will devote two pages to this general them on Oct. 4 and Oct. 18. On Nov. 1, eight pages will be set aside to bring missions into the Reformation season and to make Synodical Sunday more

meaningful to our people. Will you urge your brethren to use this material, to take the *Lutheran Witness* into their pulpits, to refer to various articles and passages in their Bible classes, to stimulate their reading of the *Witness*?

The *Lutheran Layman* will feature an eight-page tabloid in the Oct. 1 issue.

In addition our pastors will this month receive a sample mailing of materials they may use on Oct. 30 or Nov. 6. This mailing went out last week, first class, and should be on your desks when you return home. This mailing includes a large folder, "A Vineyard in a Very Fruitful Hill," as well as bulletin inserts, Minute Man Speaks items, a responsive prayer for use in services, letters to your members, and offering envelopes. Will you encourage your brethren to order and use these materials?

The special mission offerings on Pentecost last June accounted for some four to five hundred thousand dollars for the treasury of Synod. In this Reformation-Synodical Sunday season the cause of missions can well be advanced by \$600,000 or \$700,000. Here is a real opportunity to close the gap between the anticipated \$18,000,000 of income and the actual need of \$19,772,887. Will you encourage your brethren at home to make full use of this opportunity?

Will you also encourage your people in their fall mission festival, where this is still to be held? Let us increase the weekly offerings of our people for missions. In many instances the seasons of Thanksgiving, Advent, or Christmas

may be used to move people to respond generously to the thrust of the Gospel in all the world.

We remember also the *every congregation visit*. You will hear much more about this tomorrow in Dr. Herrmann's presentation. Many Districts will be having an every congregation visit this fall. The Circuit Counselor and his circuit stewardship representative plan to visit the congregations in person to discuss their goals for 1961. Proposals will be made to congregations. There they meet with either the church council or the voting body; in some instances it is to be with the entire congregation during or following a service.

Here these leaders come face to face with our good people. They will motivate them in Jesus and the Cross. Will you also at this occasion speak an earnest word about their 1960 performance? Will you encourage congregations to reach their goal, yes, exceed their goal?

To help these men with such visits, an every congregation visit *flip chart* and *commentary* has been made available to our leaders in the field. Let us use these flip charts, even if your District does not have the every congregation visit. They adapt themselves well to such visits whereby you can build a strong case for 1961, and they also encourage full co-operation for the closing months of 1960.

Mr. District President, I ask you to encourage your circuit counselors to work closely with their brethren. In your District caucuses this evening stir up the gift of God that is within

you. Keep in touch with your circuit counselors by phone, speak to them in person, know what is going on, and strengthen them in the Lord.

Mr. Circuit Counselor, stay close to your pastors and to your congregations. Agonize with them in prayer. Be deeply concerned as to their participation in this great work of the Lord. Five hundred circuit counselors working closely together with the 5,000 pastors of Synod, working brother to brother and heart to heart and shoulder to shoulder, is going to make a lot of difference! Will you do this? Jesus asks you, Will you stand up and be counted? Say yes to Him. Say yes to Jesus and the Cross and to His call to evangelize all the world. You are a leader. He has called you into this your task as a leader. He now asks that you give your very best.

Oh, the power of Christian prayer! One big reason for fiscal deficits, for this problem of being over \$1 million short this year, is due to the fact that we are not yet a praying church. We are not yet a *praying church*! Have we learned to agonize in prayer? Have we learned to wrestle with God in prayer until He gives the blessing? Oh, that we were a praying church, that we were praying preachers, that we were praying executives! I am not yet a praying preacher. Are you, friend? Let us learn the more to take this great cause to the throne of God and with Christian prayer draw down from Heaven the power and purpose and the peace of the heavenly Father. It is written in James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth

much." What are we waiting for? This is God's great and noble work. Let us go all the way!

"We are pilgrims upon the earth. Our path is neither aimless nor unknown. We are in a magnificent succession — Abel, Enoch, and Noah — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses — John and Peter and Paul — Augustine and Luther — Livingstone and Egede and Patton — Walther and Wyneken and Pieper — men of God who died in the faith, whose robes were made white in the blood of the Lamb, who rest from their labors, and into whose labors we have entered — who as strangers and pilgrims entertained longing and yearnings which the most glittering achievements or gifts of earth could not satisfy — nor which the fiercest onslaught of the enemy could quiet."

We are in a *noble company*. Ours is the greatest task on earth! If Brother Riemer, these 72 hours before the great white throne, could stand here and tell us of the great masses of saints in the homeland, the cherubim and seraphim, seeing the Lord Jesus face to face, hearing the songs of praise and adoration all over the hills of heaven — *O glory!* — what a story it would be! What a story it would be!

Brethren, God brought us to the Kingdom in this troubled century, not only to sing His praises but also to build the wall, to build it high and to build it well. This is our "holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee," Is. 64:11.

This our task has the promises of *success*. "Behold," we read in Isaiah 66, "I will gather all nations and all

tongues, and they shall come and see My glory" (v. 18). "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream" (v. 12).

This task is not easy. To build the Kingdom will *cost* us *something*. Are we surprised that it should cost us something? Since when do we expect our work in this world to be easy? When Jesus says, "Take up the cross and follow Me," we know that that cross will be heavy. We know that it is going to cut into our shoulders. We know that we are going to feel the heaviness of it. But He says, "Bear it after Me."

Mrs. Comstock, that great missionary to India, when the time came for her to return to her native land to educate her children, faced the question: "Shall I send them back and stay here with my chain of mission stations, or shall I be separated for years from these precious mission fields, shall I trust my little ones with friends in the homeland?" And so she fought out the battle, and she fought it out all alone into the long hours of the night. Then she came to this conclusion: "I will stay by the task God has given me. I will put these children in the hands of loved ones and of Christ."

So she took the children down to the great steamer, and she prayed for them there, and they all knelt down together, she and her little girls. As the ship sailed, her children waved their tiny handkerchiefs until Mother Comstock could see them no more. Then the mother dropped on her knees in the sand and said over and over again:

"Lord Jesus, I am doing this for Thee. I am putting Thee before my little girls. Lord Jesus, I am doing this for Thee!"

Then she went back to her work. Her mighty missions transformed deserts into gardens for the Lord. Brethren, it finally comes down to this, as it came down to her — *we must pay the price*. What choice have we but to pay the price?

During this eight-day conference over 900,000 men, women, and children somewhere in this big world of ours have died and gone to hell. Every twenty-four hours 120,000 are dying without Jesus and without the Gospel and without the hope of heaven. We know that salvation is only in Jesus, only in the Cross, only in the shed blood. This they either did not believe or did not hear.

So this must be our call going out to the ends of the earth: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Our mission is to say to the whole wide world: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the

waters, and he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Is. 55:1.

We are the King's men. We are on the King's mission. Only our very best will be good enough. Let us therefore set our faces to the morning. Let us be God's marching armies. Let us do the work of the Lord while it is day. Someone once said, "God will look you over — not for medals, diplomas, or degrees — but for *scars*." Let us therefore be faithful to our high calling in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be faithful in the testing hour. Let us be faithful to Jesus and to His cause.

Then one day, as we enter the great land of the morning, the Lord Jesus will take us by the hand and show us the gardens and the glories of this new home beyond the stars. Then He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

So Brother Riemer is now with his Lord in glory. He stands before the great white throne. His work is done, but *our* work is *not* done.

Our Newest Frontier: Theology

By ALFRED O. FUEBRINGER

The history of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod is intimately associated with the phenomenal development of the country in which it has its main strength. To the careful student a number of very interesting parallels become apparent between church and nation during the century and a quarter of their intertwined life. They are seen in the realms of physical growth, educational and cultural development, ingenious invention of practical techniques, attitudes toward and relationships with foreign bodies, and many others.

Not only politically, economically, and culturally have we Missourians come through the experience of gaining our independence from Europe and of conquering one frontier after another in our progress toward our present status, it has happened also theologically and ecclesiastically. The history of our synod from this standpoint is truly fascinating and moves us to thank our God again and again for what He has done for us and through us. Here are some of the frontiers which challenged our fathers and us respectively and which were the arenas of notable advances for our church: home missions; world missions, especially since World War II; personal evangelism; publications; parish education; ministerial training; mass communications. A number of others could be mentioned.

At this meeting we are not so much concerned with the past, however, as

with the present and the future. And so we ask ourselves, Is it possible that the era of new frontiers has ended or is about to draw to a close? If that is true, if we must think of our future work merely as a holding operation in areas already occupied, and if we must forego the thought of breakthroughs into new phases and fields of church work, we need to be deeply concerned about becoming lazy, about losing our vigor, about eventually burying our talent in the ground. But, thank God, that isn't the case. I am sure that until the end of the world our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, will have work for the members of His body to perform, will have challenges for His Christians to accept, and will keep on saying to His faithful disciples as He did to the church in Philadelphia: "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut."

One such frontier, which at this juncture seems to me to be the newest and most challenging and as fascinating as any, is theology. I suppose that this statement may surprise many in our midst, because they are convinced that theology has been an area of prime concern for all the leaders and for most of the rank and file throughout the history of our synod. Such men as Walther and Pieper supplied us with early outstanding work in the field of dogmatics, the former also in practical theology. Stoeckhardt was our prominent exegete. These men articulated

our theology and put it into print for all inside and outside our synod to read and study. We have had other theologians who followed in their footsteps. For more than a hundred years we have had an unbroken series of theological journals, which have supplied us with hundreds upon hundreds of fine articles and reviews. We have stressed doctrinal discussion at our conferences and conventions, emphasized doctrinal preaching, and stoutly maintained our interest in doctrinal discussion with any and all who will engage in such ventures with us.

In the face of all that I still say that theology presents a new frontier to The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. After our St. Paul convention, Theodore A. Gill, then managing editor of *The Christian Century* wrote an article for the July 18, 1956, issue of his magazine entitled "Missouri in Motion?" In it he showed himself to be an astute observer and quite an accurate analyst. I say this even though I don't agree with many of his convictions and judgments. After a report on the happenings at St. Paul, he gives his evaluation of the Missouri Synod of more than four years ago as follows:

But all these signs of intelligent moderation and general good will do not even begin to suggest the ferment in the Missouri Synod. Forces from inside and out are jogging this great church — jarring it hard.

From the outside come all the new Missouri Synod Lutherans. In the last decade the denomination has built 1,000 new churches, largely in suburbs. During the next ten years 1,350 are planned. Many, maybe most of the

new members in new churches in new communities come from other denominations with a breadth to their religious lives which the church will have to contain, with ineradicable ecumenical instincts already formed, with no patience for doctrinal untouchability. The evidence in local parishes that this influx is having its effect on Missouri Synod churches is now inescapable. . . .

At the same time, forces are building up within the church. Missouri Synod fundamentalism has never been run-of-the-mill fundamentalism. In the past at least, it was informed, reasoned, scholarly biblicism. For some time now, though, the denomination has been coasting theologically. It has lived up its theological capital. It has turned its brainy, busy, businesslike attention to other matters. It has built prize-winning plants and huge budgets and experimented with educational theory and gone in for art and triumphed in television. The state of Missouri may say "show me," but the Missouri Synod goes overboard wherever it goes. The one thing it ought to be good at, though, has lost out all around. Theology is its stepchild.

But not much longer, I think. In the seminaries there are teachers and in the pulpits there are preachers and in the executive offices there are administrators who know that conviction cannot remain a habit and that tradition must always be reassessed for truth. If they can reclaim the church's chief attention away from the denomination's busy-work and toward the ever new Word of God — watch out! Once back on the track, the Missouri Synod could pull us all.

("Missouri in Motion?" *Christian Century*, July 18, 1956, pp. 845 to 847)

In partial support of the essential correctness of this estimate I wish to submit that our published theology does not cover nearly as broad a base as we often think. It is heavily weighted in favor of systematic theology, and there particularly in dogmatics and comparative symbolics. Even many articles and books in other fields, such as our pastoral theologies, give evidence of this dogmatic accent. In thorough professional exegesis we have treated only a few complete books of the Sacred Scriptures and some short sections of the others. We have published comparatively little that can be called an adequate presentation of historical theology. In our entire history of 121 years we have, to the best of my knowledge, except for very limited private ventures, and not including magazine articles, published not one solid book on hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) or on the isagogics (introduction) to the Old and New Testaments. We have, by and large, concluded too readily that in our extant dogmatics we had the answers, or at least sufficient basis for the answers, that we might need at any time.

It is precisely in the theological questions that have arisen since our definitive work in dogmatics was done and in the areas largely or completely untouched by us in the past that our new frontier lies. I am convinced that the major work toward the solution of the difficulties which have been building up within the Synodical Conference for several decades and now seriously threaten its present composition must be done in the field of hermeneutics, where, as I just mentioned, we have

thus far done practically nothing. Within the last 12 years — that is, since my first major contact with theologians of other countries at the initial series of Bad Boll conferences — it has happened to me again and again that men of some theological stature, after a good look at representative Missouri Synod theology, have expressed their appreciation and profound admiration. But those who felt that we had become mutually well enough acquainted so that they would not be misunderstood usually added an expression of hope that the theologians of the Missouri Synod would rise to the needs of the present, update its theology, and make their contribution to the discussion of and answers to current theological problems.

No one will dispute the statement that we are living in a restless and turbulent age. Documentation can be given from just about every aspect of our life. Politics, economics, social relations, research, exploration (especially of the sea and of space), industry, architecture, art, music, and many other areas of endeavor are marked by revolutionary activity, startling discoveries, resultant dislocations and tensions, many frustrations and some fervent hopes for a better future. It has been said that the present era is more revolutionary than that of the renaissance and that of the industrial revolution. Now, it isn't possible that so many and such varied and deep upheavals can take place around man and have profound effects upon him physically, intellectually, and emotionally without spiritual repercussions. Theology must always concern itself with

contemporary man and must endeavor to understand him and communicate to him the revelation of God in language, terminology, and concepts that are intelligible and meaningful to him. Theologians who are loyal and faithful to the Word of God and who see their responsibility to their church and their age must give close study to the impact that the many changes of the present era have upon the thinking and acting of man and must pay their respects to all serious efforts made in our day to engage in relevant theological activity. As their colleagues do in other fields of professional endeavor, they must carefully evaluate whatever is new in method or content, and, while rejecting everything that is subversive of the faith, they must adopt or adapt whatever can make a contribution towards an effective channel of communication between the revelation God has given us in the Sacred Scriptures and man in his present condition and environment.

This is not an easy thing to do. In the first place, it requires much hard work, patient study, agonizing self-mortification, and a very deliberate exercise of restraint in reaching conclusions. In the second place, it readily leads to misunderstanding and resultant difficulties in personal and professional relationships. But for the welfare of the church it must be done, and the members of the church need to realize it. We cannot continue to "coast on our theology," hoping to muddle through and acting on the basis of the expediency of the moment rather than from a solid position carefully arrived at. If we wish to do our manifest duty in this respect, to conquer

our newest frontier, we as members of the synod must stimulate, support, and then generally engage in the type of theological activity which our present situation calls for. As we have done in other areas, we must go overboard for it. I am speaking, of course, only of activity carried on in conformity with Article II of the constitution of the synod, which reads:

Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

Even so, this program will require bold action, carried out in the fear of God. It will bring uneasiness to some people and perhaps the feeling that the boat is being rocked unnecessarily. It will bring out differences of opinion as to methodology, terminology, and some of the implications involved. But if the assurance can be given and accepted that what is being said and done is in harmony with the confessional paragraph of our constitution and if the proper restraint, patience, and fraternal consideration are exercised, we can with the help of God enter upon this new frontier and conquer it. A homely motto for us should be: "Let's keep our shirts on but our sleeves rolled up."

Some of the work we have done in the last few years points in the direction in which we should advance. The

Literature Board of the synod is working hard on future projects. I rejoice over the plans being formulated for a new seven-volume dogmatics. But there are many areas, especially in exegetical, historical, and practical theology, in which thorough work needs to be done.

Professor Herman Sasse of Adelaide, South Australia, has called attention to this problem frequently. Recently he wrote:

Future church historians will show how the three great movements that have shaped the inner life of Christendom in the 20th century are inter-related: the Ecumenical, the Liturgical and what has been called the Bible Movement. What we observe today is the fact that the ecumenical as well as the liturgical endeavors of our age have led to a new search for the nature and authority of Holy Scripture as the Word of God. . . . Thus all churches of Christendom are confronted with the same great problems. . . .

(*The Reformed Theological Review*, July 1960, pp. 33, 34)

I quote this to show that the work we do in this area can, please God, have an impact far beyond the confines of our synod.

Now, what to do? While I by no means wish to pretend that I have the complete answer, I want to make the following suggestions for implementation by those who share my concern and want to do something about it:

I plead with all of our clergy

- 1) To give serious thought to the recognition of theology as a vast and important frontier for our synod and to dedicate themselves to winning it.

- 2) To clear the decks everywhere, in private, in smaller groups, in conferences, in formal seminary courses, for thorough, sound, and relevant theological study in harmony with a resolution of the San Francisco Convention (*Proceedings*, p. 198) which says:

WHEREAS, The very life and health of the church depend on soundness of doctrine and practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod remind all pastors' and teachers' conferences, whether on the circuit, regional, or District level, to give due prominence on their programs to the study of Christian doctrine and its application to life (*Synodical Handbook*, 4.101; 4.103; 4.107; 4.111); and be it further

Resolved, That Synod ask all conference program committees and officers to carry out the provision of this resolution.

- 3) To urge the creation of a synodical commission on theology with a larger and broader-based membership than the present Committee on Doctrinal Unity, which shall not merely represent the synod in external theological contacts but shall above all stimulate theological activity internally.
- 4) To make much more use of the correspondence school and the school for graduate studies at the St. Louis seminary and give both ventures also active moral support in their programs of necessary expansion.

I ask the *Praesidium* of the synod and the boards of control and the academic administrators of both theological seminaries to implement fully

the San Francisco convention resolution with regard to *The Theology of Fellowshipship*:

Resolved, That the *Praesidium* of Synod encourage early completion of these studies by authorizing, through the proper channels, any necessary adjustments in the teaching schedules of the members of the faculty committees charged with this work.

and, with the concurrence of the Board for Higher Education, to make use of the indicated device also for other projects in theology. In that connection the technique used in the production of *What, Then, Is Man?* is to be recommended for further exploitation. This plan involves the selection and training of a team of competent co-authors who study and work together under expert leadership for several weeks at a time and jointly produce a needed book.

I ask the joint theological faculties to be especially concerned in this matter and to plan ways and means for energetic participation in winning this great frontier.

I ask the Literature Board of the synod and the board and the general manager of Concordia Publishing House to continue the leadership they have shown in the past and to intensify their support of this program.

Finally, I ask the College of Presidents to consider planning and holding, within the next twelve months, a meeting similar in structure to this conference, with participation by the College of Presidents and the faculties of the two theological seminaries as a minimum — preferably also by the District Vice-Presidents and the synodical and

District executives — and devoted entirely to the discussion of relevant theology.

I close with a reference to Dr. Herman W. Gockel's column in the September 1960 issue of *The Lutheran Layman*. He writes:

We were eating dinner at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel the other evening with a leader of another denomination. Halfway through the meal he asked us the question which we have been asked a dozen times before:

"How do you explain the fact that a Church like Missouri Synod, relatively small and generally conservative, was able to get the jump on all the rest of the field of religious television — and has managed to keep its front position, unchallenged, throughout the years?"

Our reply, polished by frequent use, was direct and simple:

First, it took bold and imaginative leadership. . . .

Secondly, it took a church body with an awakened membership, dedicated to a clear . . . purpose. . . .

Thirdly, it took a church body solidly united in its understanding of the Gospel — solidly united on its theological message. . . .

Above, beneath, and beyond these considerations, of course, are the bountiful benedictions of a beneficent Lord who guides the destinies of His Church — despite the insufficiency of the fragile vessels He employs.

Ultimately, it is only HE who can answer the question: Why Missouri?

In the area of which I am speaking it is at this time not yet a question of *why* but of *whether* Missouri will be employed to do the work that the church manifestly needs at this time. God grant that it will!

Summation

By GEORGE W. WITTMER

We have come to the end of a glorious conference in which we, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, have sought to work together, to strengthen ourselves, and to strengthen others for the most important work in the world, the work of Christ's kingdom. When the Lord Jesus told the man of Gadara, "Go home to thy brethren, and tell them what great things God has done for thee," He wanted this man to communicate to others about the goodness and grace of God he experienced. These words of Jesus come down through the corridors of centuries to pastors, professors, and laymen at this conference to tell us, "Go home, and tell thy brethren what great things God has done for thee."

BLESSINGS OF MEETING

One of the purposes of our meeting was to speak of past blessings. Another was to encourage each other for the future. Then we were to speak of our financial needs for the next 12 months especially and for the years to come. But mainly we came to look at the Word of God to see what it had to say to us as Christians and churchmen today.

In the year after the triennial general convention of Synod new officers and counselors have been elected in the various Districts. This conference is meant to be a stimulus for them especially and was designed to guide and instruct them in their important work.

Remembering that God's past acts are pledges of His future dealings with us, we looked back to see that our Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod was the fastest-growing Protestant body in the United States again in 1959. Yet we do not glory in this knowledge and puff up with pride. We believe that our church is a great church not because it is big and has experienced this growth but because it has the greatest message for all men — "that God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Looking at our blessings of parochial schools and Sunday schools, seeing the large number of students in our institutional training schools for the ministry of teaching and preaching, noting our church and Communion attendance, we thank God with all our hearts for His manifold mercies. Recognizing our own cold indifference to the high calling which God has given us, we bow penitently before the Lord and ask Him, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to forgive us our sins and to deepen our devotion to Him and rededicate ourselves in His service.

As we come near the end of this conference, we ask God for His help in our efforts to indoctrinate our people on the basis of *God's Word*. We beseech His strength in guarding us against worldliness and the evils of lodgery. We ask Him to forgive our coldness and indifference in prayer and ask Him

to help us remember its power in the interest of our colleges and seminaries.

One of the blessings of this conference was the opportunity for an overview of all of Synod's work. Where else could counselors and officers of our Districts as well as laymen have the opportunity to hear accounts of the work of our Synod in all of its departments? Where else would we have an opportunity to ask questions of specialists and experts about the multi-phasic work of our church body? This is a precious privilege we have enjoyed here. The responsibility that goes with the privilege is this, that we tell others in our Districts and circuits "the wonderful works of God."

DOCTRINAL MATTERS

In the presentations and the studies of the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians, and the apostle's Second Letter to Timothy, we were able to speak about questions of tremendous importance to us at all times but especially valuable now when neo-orthodox theologians are questioning verbal inspiration, inerrancy, and other fundamental doctrines of the church. We heard the fact emphasized again that our belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is of utmost importance. It is not a matter that can be explained logically or demonstrated scientifically, but inerrancy is a matter of *faith*. The fact that there are mysteries in these Gospel accounts is no problem to faith. Faith takes the Gospels for what they claim to be and understands them on their own terms as proclamations of the way to salvation through Jesus Christ. We should

never let the question of inerrancy or the mysteries of verbal inspiration become our sole or prime concern, for then we may run the risk of losing sight of the saving purpose of Holy Scripture. We are not to study our Bibles only linguistically and historically, as we might a profane document, but we are to look upon the Bible as God wants us to view it—"A lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path," a letter of God's love "to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

In this conference we have again deepened our esteem of Scripture and our appreciation of it. We have realized again what a treasure we have in this Holy Bible, which serves us in many ways. It is a pillow for our rest, a sword for our conflicts, a breastplate and shield against the temptations of Satan. It is milk for our nourishment, meat for our strength, and honey for our delight. The Sacred Scriptures give peace now and assurance for eternal life hereafter.

We realize again that God has given us no privilege without an accompanying responsibility. As members of His church we have received the Word for our own salvation. By the power of the Holy Spirit we have been led to believe it, to trust and rely upon its truth. But then we have the duty to tell it forth to all the world as God gives us ability. How much greater could our church grow if all members of our congregations realized their responsibility to work for a program of evangelism! The secret of the early church's power and progress was this,

that many amplified the church's voice by sending forth the message of salvation at every opportunity. Of those who gave their full time and effort to the work of the preaching of the Gospel, there were only a few. But of those who made their trade, their occupation, their profession of whatever nature it might be, the means of spreading the Gospel, there was a multitude. This was the secret of the power of the early church. For this reason they could "turn the world upside down." That pattern and program is not out of date for 1960.

The church tells forth its message by preaching and teaching in public and in private, but also by doctrinal statements of a confessional nature. In these it declares its faith before the world and defends itself against error. A confessing church *must* have doctrinal statements of a confessional nature to show precisely where it stands. It stands to reason that members of that church body should want — and are expected — to teach or preach according to these confessions.

In this conference we learned again that Synod does not place a "gag rule" upon its men but that we all should feel free to discuss the confessions adopted by our church. As we spoke about "Scripture, Confessions, and Doctrinal Statements" under the leadership of Dr. Repp, we were free one with another as *brethren* eager to get at the truth. We were correctly cautioned, however, that we should not state any doubts concerning Scriptural doctrines in public services or other open meetings but that we were to dis-

cuss these problems among our brethren. The world is in need of an *authentic* voice, not one that would increase bewilderment and confusion.

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

At this conference those who are preachers of the Gospel were again made to realize the high honor God has placed upon them to make them His spokesmen in declaring the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Gospel is the proclamation of God's act of rescuing the world by means of Jesus Christ. We must be as plain as St. Paul was when he declared that Gospel "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." We must tell a waiting world that Christ "has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." This preaching of the Gospel is not simply the *telling* of rescue, but it is a part of the *operation* of rescue. In this saving act the pastor has the high and holy privilege of being God's helper to carry out God's design in our world.

This pure Gospel of God's limitless love counteracts the erosion of work-righteousness. We cannot give God the glory due Him if we take credit for our own salvation. No heart is big enough for two thrones. If Christ is our Lord and Master, we must give Him the glory and the honor due to Him.

This Gospel counteracts a legalistic surrender of life. Rather it moves us to give ourselves completely and entirely to Christ because "He has redeemed us with His Holy precious

blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”

We were reminded that, unlike the pilot who was lost but was still making good time, church leaders are to be alert to every opportunity to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. They should never lose sight of their main purpose — to bring to men what St. Paul called the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ. The pastor's principal purpose is not to be a social lion, a fund raiser, a public relations agent, a builder of edifices to outshine endeavors of other parishes; but he is always to remember that he is an undershepherd of Jesus Christ. The constant temptation confronts us that we become so active in extraneous things as to lose sight of the purpose of the ministry, to share with others the power and the glory of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. The warning was sounded that parish administration can be a *monster* that sucks strength from ministers and congregations, making them slaves of the organizational structure of the church, rather than making the organization serve the congregation and the pastor to hold high the banner of the Cross of Christ and use it as a key that will unlock the doors of heaven. We should remember the warnings against activism, passivism, blueprintism, and structurelessness, “booby traps” into which all of us may fall.

At this conference we have had the privilege of discussing these and many other subjects with one another in a free and frank manner. I am sure that all of us have deepened our apprecia-

tion of the glorious office of the ministry and of the tremendous importance of all the work of the church. Recognizing ourselves as undershepherds of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, we pastors take our place with John the Baptist to say regarding our Lord and Master, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Knowing the privilege of this work, we may often grow tired *in* the work of our ministry, but we may never grow tired *of* the work of the ministry. We pray God that we never grow *weary* in welldoing, but rather grow *expert* in doing well for others by bringing them the one thing needful for time and eternity, the means of eternal salvation.

In the work of establishing the budget we have been concerned with cold facts and figures, but we have seen again what great opportunities God has given us in these last days of our world. The sum that we have decided upon may seem staggering at first, but it is attainable with God's help and blessing. We should be able to launch out ever deeper than we think we should go. This is the Lord's work. He will never leave us or forsake us.

The world in which we live needs this Gospel badly. The command of our Lord Jesus Christ rings in our ears to establish His kingdom without frontiers, “looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

Depending on Jesus' promises, we go forth to bring to men in all the world the message that can transform them. God has given evidence of His transforming grace. Thus in sunny

Africa we see trophies of our work in transformed lives, people completely changed by God's amazing power. On India's coral strands we see striking tribute to Christ's mercy and to the force of His Word in the breaking down of the idols of heathenism and the setting up of the Cross of Jesus Christ. In the Orient we have found lovely pearls of sacrificial living. In every country where the Gospel has gone, we see that men who were once far from God now bring to the Lord the pure gold of faith, the fragrant frankincense of their prayers, and the mystic myrrh of their deep devotion. We could never be able to tell half the story of what Christ's church is doing in the redemption of mankind and the reconciliation of man with God, but we can see plainly the fulfillment of the Lord's promise "My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

OPPORTUNITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Not for centuries have *opportunities* of the church been so glorious or the *responsibilities* so terrifying as now. To say that we are living in critical days is an understatement. The world has never experienced a time like ours. All the historians record nothing like the crises confronting us today. Without being accused of exaggeration we can say that the foundations of our civilization are cracking. Without seeking only the dark side of things, we are safe in asserting that the affairs of nations have gone from bad to worse. We are living in a war-scarred and a war-scared

world. The United Nations Security Council is trying valiantly and desperately to settle matters of dispute between nations of our world in an orderly and brotherly way. Yet we must admit that there are many sessions in which tempers flare, passions are aroused, and charges are met with caustic countercharges. Rivalry, suspicion, and jealousy are evident.

In the world of science we have made such amazing progress that we wonder what more could be added to the knowledge of man. Yet scientists are busily engaged seeking to discover and develop interspace communication, accurate guided missiles, bombs and superbombs. The fact that frightens us is that nations are spending millions of dollars on the development of techniques in the use of atomic power, but they are spending nothing to strengthen the moral character of those into whose hands this tremendous power will be placed. While we here in America talk about our blood-bequeathed liberties, our people generally are not on guard as they should be against the subtle infiltration of Communistic ideas, which, if they gained wide acceptance, would sound the very death knell to those blood-bought freedoms.

It remains therefore for the *church* to be strong especially for a time like this and to sound as with the voice of a trumpet its sure message from God. Sometime ago one of the national magazines reported the results of a survey made of many American homes. This question was asked: "If you were granted only one wish, what would that be?" The answer in almost all

homes was this: "I would wish for peace." Now we know that the peace for which these American people wished is peace among the nations of the world, the absence of war and strife. The people in our world are wearied with worries about the rumors of a new war. But we are also certain that if we were to conduct a survey of homes in our land and speak "heart to heart" to people from border to border and from sea to shining sea, we would find the desire in the hearts of our people deeper than the hope for peace among nations. We would find a burning desire, a gnawing hunger for personal peace, peace of mind, the assurance that we have peace with God. God has endowed man with the mysterious mechanism in his brain that we call a conscience. This conscience tells man that he dare not come into the presence of the Lord, who knows his every thought, his every action, his every word, and say to that God, "Look at me . . . I am perfect." To escape the cold clutching hand of fear that reaches out because of his condemning conscience, man will do almost anything. Many men even put themselves to work to show how philosophy and psychology can solve the problems brought on by a lack of peace of mind. Bookstores of our nation are crowded with prescriptions and formulas for making the human race happy by showing man how to triumph over his fears. These do not have the answer to men's needs, *but we do*. This is where our church must be strong. Many years ago the Lord said that the salvation of the world would come "not by might, not

by power, but by My Spirit." We still remember the words of General Douglas McArthur at the end of the conflict in the Pacific when he was recalled from military service. He stated in an address before the Congress of the United States that the answer to the problems of world recovery is theological. That means the spread of the true theology, grounded in God's Holy Word, the theology that we, by God's grace, have learned to know. It is the theology that is taught in our colleges and seminaries, that is preached from our pulpits, and given as "milk of the Word" to children of our schools and Sunday schools. It is the theology that determines "not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

CRITICAL WORLD CONDITIONS

Shall we be afraid because of critical conditions of our world? This is not the first crisis the church of our Savior has faced. The world had the death rattle in its throat when the New Testament church came into being. Paul lived his life and preached his message in one of the darkest periods of the world. His remarkable Letter to the Romans was written to citizens of what was then the capitol city of the world. It would be difficult to imagine a darker picture than that which he painted in the first chapter of his Letter to Romans. We are not afraid, for we never go alone. The Lord was with the leaders of the early church, and He fulfills His promise to us: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." When great movements are afoot and the Son of God

goes forth to war and we go with Him, we are either *on* the way with Him or *in* His way. It was the fixed habit of our Lord Jesus to look for harvest in unlikely places. Look at the very situation He had in mind when speaking of the "white harvest." All the disciples knew to do about the town of Sychar in Samaria was to detour around it or to pass through it in a hurry. They thought it to be stony ground where no seed would ever spring up. Yet Jesus saw in this unlikely soil promise of an abundant harvest. He looked squarely at the whole depraved world and said "This is God's world. This is the kingdom of the Lord." He assured us that with His Gospel the most hopelessly lost could be found, the most despicably foul could be cleansed, and those sunken into depths of degradation could be uplifted.

Not only was the Christian church born at a time of turbulence and revolutions, but our Missouri Synod was born at such a time. Social conditions were not good. The church of Europe was impotent and decadent because of the curse of rationalism. It was necessary for God to raise up heroic men if the life of the church was to be saved. Into the new world came the leaders of our Synod, not to give a transfusion to the church from one arm to the other, but to give new blood, new strength and vitality, to the church by directing attention to the blood of Christ as the fountain where men can wash their foul sins from their souls.

For more than a century our church has been characterized by triumphant missionary aggressiveness. It has been aware that to the eternal Christ belongs

all tongues and races of men. Year after year, generation after generation, in spite of war and upheaval and disappointment, it is carrying the banner of Christ's kingdom and the message of love and reconciliation into a world of sin and selfishness. We are justly proud of that long procession of heroes who crowd the pages of our church's history, whose eyes were set on far horizons, who were not slowed in their progress by high mountains, by deep rivers, or by dark forests.

Shall we not be as aggressive as they? Do not the times demand this? Do we not have the same power of our Lord Jesus Christ that they had? We must march to our present task, not with fear but with faith, not with crutches and bandages but with the sound of trumpets and sturdy marching feet. The light that falls upon our pathway is not the light of the setting sun. It is the light of the morning. We behold a new age and the dawn of a new day in the history of our church.

May the promise of Almighty God spur us on to attempt great things for God and expect great things from God. God help us, everyone who had the privilege of being here, to go home and tell what great things God has done for us. Then what we have done and seen here will be shared by others, and with God's blessing our church will march forward until God in His infinite wisdom will put an end to this world and will translate the church militant into the church triumphant in glory. Until then there comes the voice of God down through the corridors of the centuries: "Rekindle the gift of God that is within thee."

Implementation of Conference Program In Circuits by Counselors

By OLIVER R. HARMS

"How much will it cost the brethren?" This was about the first question asked when the thought was suggested that there be a meeting such as this, because a meeting like this cannot be held without a considerable cost to the treasury of Synod.

More pertinent than that at the moment is the question, "How much would we lose if we did not carry out the program of implementing these meetings and carrying all of the wonderful things that we have heard here in plenary session and in the group and section meetings to all of the congregations and the members of our church?" It would be a tragedy if we left all of that information merely on this particular level and if only the people who have been at these meetings receive the information that has been given. This would have some worth, but the cost would be too high because we need to bring this message to everybody in the church, to all of the members.

You will remember, my friends, that because of extremely hot weather you were often uncomfortable in the hours when Dr. Franzmann presented his classic statements concerning the Holy Scriptures, with particular reference to the inspiration of the Scriptures and to the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. But you stayed with him, you were interested, and that's why you stayed with him, for you wanted to know what the pronouncement would be in

a time like this from a theological professor at one of our seminaries in the day in which we live. The weather was still hot, and you were still uncomfortable when Professor Eggold spoke to you about "The Church Hears and Tells the Word." But you needed to be interested and to listen to his plain language with regard to these things because there are no other means in our hands for leading the people to Jesus save the means we have in the Word and in the sacraments.

You've sat in cooler atmosphere, but no less spellbound, through Dr. Caemmerer's presentation "The Gospel to Be Preached," for you knew, as you have known, and I pray will continue to know, that there is nothing in this wide world that can serve as a substitute for declaring in a pure and simple way the great story of Jesus and His love.

I know from the attention that you gave to Professor Coiner as he spoke about "Holding Fast to the Head" that you would not want to have missed what he had to say. In addition to these four chief essays, you have heard and will hear other lectures concerning the work of the church and the position of our church on the basis of Scripture and its teachings with our theological pronouncements and our Christian faith.

So, does anybody ask, How much does it cost? The answer is, That all depends. Whether there is any cost at

all, even in dollars, to the treasury of the church, with reference to a meeting such as this, all depends on God's grace and guidance, on the transmission of the program to all of the people in the church.

It will take some work to transmit this program. It will take work, first and above all and chiefly, on the part of the Counselors. Next to the President of the District, you Counselors are the ranking personnel in the transmission of this program. You will say that you are busy. Shall more work be piled on your already busy program and day? Certainly you're busy. You ask, Shall we take an even greater load? or can we take a greater load? It all depends again; it depends on whether or not you are willing and whether you will be truly able to take on a greater load than you already have in a busy parish and as the Counselor in the Circuit. It all depends on something in the heart. Are you a penitent Counselor — a penitent counselor in the true sense of the term, who is sorry for his sins, contrite because of his lack in the things that he ought to do, contrite because of the many sins that continue to adhere to his person and also to his work?

But repentance is not only contrition; repentance is also faith, the faith that embraces the glory of Jesus, who came into the world to seek and to save them that are lost. That includes the Counselors; it includes all of us. If we have the proper attitude toward our Savior and through His great love toward our work, then we will take on this special load, and it is going to be an extra

heavy one. You knew that, I trust. You understood that when you came here. And when you accepted the election in your District, you knew that there would be work in this office, and extra work, not just honor — if it be honor to be elected to a position (and I think it is). The counselor needs to make every possible effort to carry through the program of implementation, of carrying to the congregations and to the members every bit of all of what we've done.

We are giving you at this time a schedule and some other things in regard to the activity of carrying the program to the people. If you think that some of the dates come too soon and you can't use them at all, then use your own by all means. This program cannot be worked out for everybody, but it can be adapted by everybody through discussion. The only suggestion that I would make in this regard is: Don't wait so long that it becomes a cold message within your own hearts. Yesterday and the days that have gone by, the thought frequently came to me personally: If the Counselors could only call all of their pastors and all of the people together at this exact moment, how wonderful that would be, and how rich would be the transmission of the program and of the message! But necessarily there is some elapsing time between now and the day when you can implement the program.

In regard to the program, your committee felt that there should be at least four meetings in every circuit, four meetings in order that the program may receive the proper attention. These meetings should last the whole

day. We suggest to the Counselors that the following dates might be the dates that serve the purpose in this regard. Incidentally, you will be given a report of this in the minutes, too, and you will be given a transcript of this presentation. However, the suggestion of today is that the first meeting be held October 3, that the second meeting be held November 7, that the third meeting be held December 5, and the fourth meeting be held January 9.

These meetings are under the direction, of course, of the Counselors, and we urge that the Counselors request that all of the pastors be present at these meetings and that if the program is to be carried, let's say, into the Bible class program, that perhaps the Bible class teachers also be brought into the conference or the circuit meetings at which the program is presented.

With regard to the program at the circuit meetings, when the pastors of the circuit are together, we suggest first that the Circuit Counselor present the matters which were presented in the plenary sessions in the four chief essays of this meeting; that the Counselor himself takes on this presentation; then that the Circuit Counselor select the pastor of his choosing to take the Bible study portion of the program; and that he select another member of his circuit to discuss the application of the message to the personal lives of the people and of the pastors in the congregation.

We suggest that at the first meeting the essay of Dr. Franzmann, in the morning sessions, be taken in the morning, and that the discussion of that essay be taken in the morning of that

first day, October 3; that in the afternoon of that day the second portion of Dr. Franzmann's paper be taken and the remainder of the afternoon be given over to the discussion of this paper.

At the other three meetings we suggest that the main essay of the plenary session here be read in the morning and discussed in the morning, and that in the afternoon portion of the meeting Dr. Bretscher's paper on "The Lodge," Dr. Fuerbringer's paper which is going to be delivered on "Theological Emphases," Dr. Repp's paper on "The Scriptures, the Confessions," etc., be taken, or that other important items also be discussed in the afternoon of these days.

Now a few words about the congregations' program. This, you will understand, is on the circuit level, with the Counselor taking the program and bringing it to his pastors. In the congregations, the committee feels there should be no attempt to present these matters to the congregations in fewer than four meetings. The calendar could be arranged by the pastor or by a committee appointed by him for this purpose. The material should be presented — it would be a wonderful thing if this could be done — it should be presented to the whole congregation. The committee does not know how many of the people of your congregations would come if you were to say: "On Wednesday evening at 7:00 o'clock we ask the congregation to come together to study," and then give the program of one of these days. We do not know how many people would come. We wish that the whole congregation

would be gathered at that one time. However, you may need to break this down, and you very likely will need to break this down into sectional meetings of the congregation, and you could do it on this wise, that you have a meeting of one section of the congregation, A to K, whatever your division would be, on an evening, etc., through the four meetings.

Here are some other organizations to which you may report: we urge you to carry the message to the voters of your congregation; to carry this program to the Lutheran Laymen's League groups or their equivalent; to carry this program to the Lutheran Women's Missionary League in your congregations; to carry the message to the youth groups; to carry the message to other groups in your congregations, chiefly to the Bible classes as they might study Colossians and 2 Timothy. We urge also that the pastors make use of the opportunity, provided them and granted them through this program, of preaching carefully prepared sermons

on the subjects suggested in the essays and the other papers that have been here delivered.

The committee feels, too, that in order to stimulate activity — not to suggest distrust by any means but to stimulate activity and to stimulate a program — that the pastors in the circuit be requested to make their reports to their Counselors and that the first report of the pastors to the Counselor be made by December 1; that the Counselors make their first report to the President of the District by December 15; that the President of the District report to the President of Synod on January 15, February 15, March 1, and that a final report might be given to the President as early as April 15.

It will take a great effort to do it, but the personnel at St. Louis will try to get copies of the materials into the hands of pastors and all male teachers at the end of September, in time for the first meeting. Additional copies required will be sent to the Counselors in bulk upon the Counselors' request.